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EDITORIAL

JUN 17

THE LEGAL RIGHTS BILL

The banners in the brave days of the civil rights struggle proclaimed the dignity and irrefutable nobility of the cause: *Justice. Equality. Jobs.* The campaigns then were sharp and sometimes shocking, and while the response from government was often tardy or incomplete, it was always directed to the demands.

This year, the keepers of the civil rights cause could come up with no slogan catchier than "The burden of proof in antidiscrimination lawsuits should be on the employer!" It probably appealed to lawyers (273 members of Congress, most of them with some legal education, voted for the proposition) but it did not start a prairie fire of enthusiasm in the country. And it is there at the grass roots that a civil rights movement must grow to change policy in Washington.

The House passed the civil rights bill, a watered-down version of an already meek measure of marginal importance to the empowerment of minorities and women, and the Senate is considering similar action as we go to press. But the votes were not veto-proof, and it seemed unlikely the Democrats would be able to reverse President Bush's plan to make the "quota issue" the centerpiece of the Republicans' electoral appeal to white working-class America in the year ahead.

Democratic leaders used pressure and parliamentary stratagems, but they had no political foundation for their civil rights bill. They gave members no programs for economic development, for instance, to serve and mollify anxious constituents worried about minority affirmative action. And most important, they found no mass support for their efforts. Civil rights this year ended up as an argument between potential electoral candidates about lawsuits. It's been a long slide since the brave days.

TORTURE OF PALESTINIANS
Aryeh Neier

MEXICO'S FREE TRADERS
Joel Simon

PROBING 'OCTOBER SURPRISE'
David Corn

NUDITY AND FREE SPEECH
William O'Rourke

REDS IN THE BLACK BELT
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NAMING AND BLAMING

MEDIA GOES WILDING IN PALM BEACH

KATHA POLLITT

I drink, I swear, I flirt, I tell dirty jokes. I have also, at various times, watched pornographic videos, had premarital sex, hitchhiked, and sunbathed topless in violation of local ordinances. True, I don't have any speeding tickets, but I don't have a driver's license either. Perhaps I'm subconsciously afraid of my "drives"? There are other things, too, and if I should ever bring rape charges against a rich, famous, powerful politician's relative, *The New York Times* will probably tell you all about them—along with, perhaps, my name. Suitably adorned with anonymous quotes, these revelations will enable you, the public, to form your own opinion: Was I asking for trouble, or did I just make the whole thing up?

In April the media free-for-all surrounding the alleged rape of a Palm Beach woman by William Smith, Senator Ted Kennedy's nephew, took a vicious turn as the *Times*—following NBC, following the *Globe* (supermarket, not Boston, edition), following a British scandal sheet, following *another* British scandal sheet—went public with the woman's name, and a lot more: her traffic violations, her mediocre high school grades, her "little wild streak," her single motherhood, her mother's divorce and upwardly mobile remarriage. Pretty small potatoes, really; she sounds like half my high school classmates. But it did make a picture: bad girl, loose woman, floozy.

Or did it? In a meeting with more than 300 outraged staff members, national editor

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LETTERS.

THE TRUE F-WORD

Seattle

Fascism. Fascism. Fascism. There—I've said it. So has Andrew Kopkind, quoting Bernie Sanders ["Imposing the New Order at Home," April 8]. But we need to hear this word more often, read its definition and compare it with the current national course. In fact, progressive publications like *The Nation* and the movement(s) they represent should enlarge their scope of concerns beyond chasing down the latest Bushian atrocity and into envisioning—and averting—a Fascist States of America by the turn of the millennium.

American fascism will be unlike the historical models we may be on alert against. After the gulf war, we must realize that a large percentage of Americans will *welcome* the fascism of the triumphant military state. The rest of us ought to get our heads out of the sand and say the word. It's good exercise. It may be Adolf's century after all. Fascism. *Joel Taunton*

THE OATH

Stevens, Pa.

While Owen Fiss's April 15 editorial ["A Decency Czar?"] detailing the new "specter of National Endowment for the Arts censorship" was interesting in its own right, one line stuck out like Woody Allen's sore middle finger in *The Front*. Professor Fiss notes that the Helms amendment required artists to sign antiobscenity pledges and that "those pledges harked back to the days of loyalty oaths." However, Fiss need only wander on down to Pennsylvania rather than hark back to bygone days to find good old-fashioned loyalty oaths. The professor's colleagues toiling within our Commonwealth's public academies must sign a "Loyalty Oath" (its precise title) assuring the state that they are not "subversive persons" and that they will wholly "support, obey and defend" the federal and state Constitutions.

Disagreement with those Constitutions is apparently grounds for denying entry to the Commonwealth's distinguished academies of higher learning. In addition, those inflammatory lecturers who are unable to rein in their most radical, perhaps subversive, thoughts presumably will fail to maintain their employment here in the state of Valley Forge and the Gettysburg Address.

Bruce Merenstein

SEALS AND WOLVES

Rapid City, S.D.

Who is David Seals to speak for the Lakota/Dakota people concerning *Dances With Wolves*, or anything else ["The New Custerism," May 13]? What are his credentials? Does he teach Lakota language? or even speak it? or understand it? Does he teach Native American studies? Is he a native scholar? or even an Indian? Was he born and raised on any of the Sioux reservations in South Dakota? No! No! But, then, maybe his trashy novel *The Powwow Highway* gives him license to say anything he pleases about the Sioux, yes? There are two things in his "Custerism" essay that he cannot get away with.

First, Seals talks about the "questionable cultural call" pointed out to him by two Indian friends, i.e., that in *Wolves* "the men generally speak Lakota in the feminine form; the screenplay's dialogue was translated by a woman, who also served as the primary linguistic coach." What is his evidence for such a charge? Let's ask him for some examples here. What right does he have to tell your readers such lies? Does he really believe that a woman like Doris Leader Charge, who teaches Lakota language at the Sinte Gleska Community College on the Rosebud Reservation, does not know the difference between the usage of the male Lakota speaker and the female? Does he think he can get away with labeling her unworthy as a Lakota language teacher? Is he calling Albert White Hat a liar and an incompetent? Who the hell does he think he is? The Lakota language translation work done in *Dances With Wolves* is accomplished and brilliant, the true voice of the people, and it made all of us sit up and listen. Our pride in our scholars cannot be diminished by this loudmouth.

Second, Seals's name-dropping is an outrage; a technique he uses to give himself the credentials to speak for everyone from Arvol Looking Horse of the Minniconjou to Hartman Lomaweima of Hopi Second Mesa. With these folks seemingly behind him, this bully even has the temerity to call Floyd Westerman "Costner's Hollywood Indian." All of us who have known Floyd for a hundred years know that this is a man who has paid his dues. He doesn't deserve this treatment from anyone, least of all a second-rate fiction writer like David Seals!

I'm not calling for censorship. I believe in freedom of the press. But this presumptuous piece by Seals is arrogant beyond belief!

Elizabeth Cook-Lynn

CHOCTAW VIEW

Waco, Tex.

As a descendant of the Choctaw Nation, I perhaps have difficulty understanding the Lakota and their gripes about *Dances With Wolves*. Or perhaps I am simply having trouble following David Seals's logic. (I regard the second as more likely.) As I understand it, he objects to *Wolves* on two counts: 1) The movie is one-sided and not completely accurate; and 2) the Sioux have not benefited from the film. On count one, *Wolves* must plead guilty. So must virtually every historical film made in Hollywood, from *Birth of a Nation* to Oliver Stone's recent bludgeoning blockbuster. Film, a visual medium, is hard pressed to represent complexities of politics and policy. *Wolves*, at least, is one-sided in a way that breaks from the long tradition described by Seals as the Old Custerism, and this is why his point two makes little sense. He says the Sioux are no better off financially because of the movie (as though they would be? Check the status of Vietnam vets after *Rambo*, *Platoon*, etc.); but all the same they receive residuals in the form of raised awareness. *Dances With Wolves* individualizes our own American holocaust for millions of people, perhaps for the first time. My wife left the movie with tears in her eyes; she was, she said, "ashamed." She was not the only one. *Greg Garrett*

WHITEMAN'S BURDEN

Los Angeles

Back in the early sixties when Bob Moses was recruiting for the Mississippi Summer Project, he told Northern students that their one brief visit might not tell them much about the rural American South. But, he added, if they kept their eyes open, they could learn home truths about their own Northern society.

Kevin Costner's *Dances With Wolves* might bring similar unexpected political dividends. David Seals's judgment that for all its good intentions *Wolves* is part of the "New Custerism" that alienates us from Native Americans is probably on target. Nonetheless this fine movie does tell us a great deal about white America's mission toward the Third World. It helps reduce our alienation from ourselves, for which we and the world can be grateful.

Bill Doyle

CORRECTION AND AMPLIFICATION

Washington

In my May 13 "Beltway Bandits" I reported that I attended a luncheon nine years ago at which Dinesh D'Souza, then an editor of *The Dartmouth Review*, boasted of improperly obtaining a confidential list of members of the Dartmouth Gay Student Association and publishing it. I screwed up. The *Review* printed the names only of the group's officers and excerpts of personal letters written by gay students, all of which it had acquired from open records filed with the school's administration.

After *The Nation* received a letter from D'Souza requesting a correction, I went rummaging through some old files and discovered that what I thought was a clear recollection of a 1982 conversation with D'Souza and several other conservative college journalists was actually a composite memory (I must have been in a P.C.-induced haze). D'Souza and his acolytes did gloat over the gay-naming incident. But what he bragged about was that his paper had employed some underhanded means to secure a copy of the alumni mailing list. The *Review*'s use of that list was yet another controversy in which it had been embroiled. According to a note I made after the lunch, D'Souza, talking about the mailing list caper, proclaimed, "Let them sue. They can't prove anything." I apologize for attributing his boast to the wrong act. *David Corn*

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EDITORIALS.

Come Back, Shays

The economic failure in Massachusetts, which followed fast on the defunct economic miracle, has nevertheless spawned a rather miraculous movement of protest. On June 3 more than a thousand residents of several tiny towns in the northwestern part of the state filled the streets of Shelburne Falls in a conscious reenactment of Shays' Rebellion, the brave, but doomed, revolt of overtaxed and debt-ridden farmers against the landed gentry, merchants and bankers of post-Revolutionary New England.

Two hundred and five years later, the principal of the Buckland-Shelburne Elementary School, Paul Swem, dressed up in Shays-era costume and announced that he would walk to the State House in Boston, a hundred miles away, to protest severe cuts made by the Democratic legislature and approved by Republican Governor William Weld. Swem will carry with him a petition signed by more than 500 students, staff and townspeople asking for the restoration of funds for their schools. Many among the multitude in Shelburne Falls carried signs demanding *more* taxes and "overrides" (in town meetings and elections) of the cap on property taxes mandated by Massachusetts' Proposition 2½, the result of an antitax revolt of a very different nature several years ago.

Massachusetts is of course only one of many states suffering from budget crunchitis. Around the country, economists and officials are likening the situation to the worst days of

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the Great Depression. Cuts in aid to schools and colleges, in child welfare, Medicaid and services, from road repair to parks and libraries, are deep and wide, and the effects are already devastating to the quality of life in big cities and small towns alike. There have been some protests, like the large labor march in New York City and the takeover of buildings by students at the City University of New York. But the demonstrations have not reversed legislative or executive action, and the cuts get deeper.

Some part of the problem is caused by the recession, which places increasing demand on health and welfare needs at the same time that it reduces income and consequent tax revenues. But even if the recession ended tomorrow, which it won't, the budget problems would remain. The Reagan-Bush tax cuts (which were echoed in many state tax systems), the reduction in federal payments to localities, the opportunistic profligacy of certain state administrations (such as Mario Cuomo's in New York) in giving tax reductions to voters in the boom days and the growing regressivity of the entire public economy will outlast the next phases of the business cycle.

In Massachusetts, for instance, an extremely regressive income tax coupled with the Prop 2½ property tax cap gave former Governor Michael Dukakis's economic miracle a very shaky foundation. Revenue was strongly dependent on defense and high-tech business. When that declined, the whole shebang collapsed. The real estate market went south, business sank and many of the vaunted plans that Dukakis promised he'd duplicate at the national level if he were elected President were abandoned or reduced to insignificance.

Massachusetts voters are rid of Dukakis, but his malign neoliberal legacy lives on, and his Republican successor has absolutely no handle on a fix beyond waiting for a general business upturn. Shays II illuminates the problem, but it is doubtful whether it will produce the revolution-within-the-Revolution that Shays I attempted. In early 1787 Shays and his band raided the arsenal at Springfield but failed to get their munitions and fled to Vermont and other hideouts (he was also hounded by a bunch of Harvard boys, protecting their class interests then as always). In response to Shays and similar insurgencies brewing elsewhere, the wealthy targets of revolt got together in Philadelphia and cobbled together a Constitution to secure their own positions. A shadow of Shays can be seen only in the Bill of Rights, which spoke to the concerns of the dirt farmers and debtors who had fought the Revolution in the first place but were left out when the blessings of liberty were distributed. As for Shays himself, he went out West (to Indian country, to the Niagara Frontier) and died of old age.

RU 486 (Cont.)

I was pleased to read *The Nation*'s May 13 editorial on RU 486 by Lawrence Lader, "Breaking the Ban." As Lader reported, the twin gatekeepers of RU 486, the French manufacturer and the U.S. government, have kept the drug from even being tested in this country because of threats from the anti-choice lobby. The resulting vacuum is being filled by a new mayoral-Congressional coalition. Its goal is to change the "debate and climate" around abortion that Roussel-Uclaf, the manufacturer, cites as a reason for not exporting the drug for testing in the United States.

In April New York Mayor David Dinkins wrote to President Bush and Roussel-Uclaf's president, Edouard Sakiz, endorsing clinical testing of the drug; he also solicited thirty-three mayors to be signatories to the letters. The New Hampshire legislature passed a resolution offering the state as the first site in the nation for clinical testing. The New York State Assembly has introduced a similar resolution. Groups in California are investigating the possibility of importing and distributing the drug under the state's "mini-F.D.A." law, which allows the testing and approval of drugs for use within the state's borders. A bill is pending in the Minnesota legislature that would appropriate money for use of RU 486 in family planning and for the treatment of disease.

Congress is scrutinizing Food and Drug Administration policy on RU 486. Following pressure from Senator Jesse Helms and Representative Robert Dornan in 1989, the F.D.A. placed RU 486 on an import alert—a little-used list that bans dangerous drugs from being imported for personal use. In a hearing last November in the House, Representative Ron Wyden showed how the F.D.A.'s import alert had prevented scientists researching the nonabortifacient uses of RU 486 from getting the drug, making it hard to avoid the conclusion that the F.D.A. has allowed politics to contaminate science.

Wyden and Henry Waxman have introduced legislation that would lift the import alert. On another front, the new F.D.A. commissioner, Dr. David Kessler, has reversed years of F.D.A. inaction by cracking down on false food labeling. Will he show the same intelligence and independence on RU 486 and stand up to Republican orthodoxy on this important scientific issue?

The nonabortifacient applications of RU 486 are the anti-choice forces' Achilles heel. Several clinical tests indicate that RU 486 can treat a number of conditions, including breast cancer and brain tumors. Some 44,000 American women will die of breast cancer this year while anti-choice activists argue that RU 486 must not be imported for testing of any kind because they don't like one of its uses. It's one thing for RU 486 opponents to say they are "pro-life" and quite another to be pro-cancer.

Bold strategies are needed to fight for the testing and availability of RU 486, but I doubt that Lader's two proposals—developing an exact copy of RU 486 and developing a pill that works similarly to RU 486—are feasible. Both ideas assume a level of contraceptive research that is simply not occurring in this country. All but one of the major American pharmaceutical companies (Ortho, a subsidiary of Johnson & Johnson) stopped contraceptive research over the past two decades. Smaller companies and nonprofit groups now shoulder most of the burden of contraceptive development in the United States.

RU 486 will eventually find its way to this country one way or another. The question is whether it will come soon, or in a decade, when Roussel-Uclaf's patent expires, and whether it will come through an underground market or through the front door, by F.D.A. approval. The drug will soon be mar-

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keted in Britain; according to Roussel-Uclaf, the Scandinavian countries and the Netherlands will probably be next. As the drug becomes more widely available in Western Europe, especially with European integration after 1992, an American black market is bound to develop. Black market RU 486 might be taken without the necessary medical supervision, posing a danger to women.

The Wyden-Waxman bill, the Dinkins initiative, the New Hampshire bill and the efforts of the new F.D.A. commissioner could combine to change the "climate" as well as the policy, but not without continued pressure from American consumers. Readers who think that American women deserve access to the safest, most effective and least expensive methods of abortion and who think that scientific decisions should be made by scientists, not ideologues, should write to President Bush and to Edouard Sakiz (Roussel-Uclaf, 35 Boulevard des Invalides, 75007, Paris, France) to encourage them to allow RU 486 to be tested in this country.

Hoechst A.G., Roussel-Uclaf's German parent company, worries that boycotts will cut into its $6.4 billion in annual profits in North America. Since a minority of anti-choice zealots have persuaded the companies to be more concerned with pickets than profits, Roussel-Uclaf should now hear from the far more numerous pro-choice consumers.

MARK GREEN

Mark Green is Commissioner of the New York City Department of Consumer Affairs.

Housing Banks

A fundamental restructuring of the system of housing finance is needed in this country to meet the growing housing shortage. There is a straightforward way to assure adequate, low-cost financing for housing: Establish publicly funded nonprofit housing banks. The sole mission of such banks would be to provide residential home mortgage and construction loans at low rates of interest. They would assure financing for moderately priced homes and apartments. Such a restructuring of housing finance would prevent repetitions of the savings and loan fiasco, benefit both home buyers and the building industry and help address the housing crisis.

Without the need to earn profits on loans or to pay interest on borrowed money at rates sufficient to earn profits for private investors, a nonprofit housing bank could charge very low interest. Indeed, studies have shown that a housing finance institution need charge no more than 2 to 3 percent on its loans to cover its overhead and the risk of bad loans.

The saving to consumers would be tremendous. For example, over the life of a twenty-five-year, $40,000 mortgage at 12 percent interest, a consumer pays more than $86,300 in interest payments. By contrast, the same loan at 2 percent costs only $10,860 in interest, a saving of more than $75,000 over the life of the loan. Multiply this type of saving by millions of consumers, and the money saved over the next generation would be in the billions or trillions of dollars.

The money saved from lower interest rates would be available to consumers to buy either more or larger housing units, as well as other consumer items. The residential construction industry would benefit in two ways—more consumer money would be available to pay for the bricks and mortar of housing units, and contractors would pay lower interest rates on construction loans. The result: more housing construction at a lower cost to consumers.

Where would the housing banks' start-up capitalization come from? One source would be the elimination of mortgage-interest and real estate tax deductions, which benefit wealthy homeowners. Closing this loophole would yield $50 billion a year in additional taxes, which could be used to capitalize the housing bank. Admittedly, this method would be a political hot potato. The real estate industry could be expected to mobilize millions of homeowners across the country to oppose any significant reduction in the mortgage-interest write-off. Another source of capital could be a requirement that tax-exempt organizations deposit all or part of their liquid assets in the housing bank as a quid pro quo for their tax exemption. Still another way to raise funding, particularly useful for housing banks established at the state or local levels, would be to impose stiff capital gains taxes on short-term real estate speculation and transaction fees on transfers of higher-priced real estate. Finally, money could always be found in the bloated military budget, though the overall budget agreement last year precludes shifting funds from the military to the domestic budget until 1993. Of course, once the housing banks were in operation, the money from loan repayments would be recycled into more mortgage and construction loans.

We have seen what unrestrained capitalism has meant for the housing industry. Is it too much to demand that one segment of finance be removed from the market—the segment intended to provide financing for housing, which is, after all, a necessity of life?

ARLENE ZAREMBKA

Arlene Zarembka, a lawyer, is author of The Urban Housing Crisis *(Greenwood Press).*

★

Rust v. Sullivan

This ruling's droll:
Abortion's not appropriate as birth control—
At least it's not for women living on the dole—
So doctors can't discuss abortion with a prole.

It's still O.K.
To get advice from any dope who comes your way,
(As long as he is not receiving public pay).
It's only those who know who aren't allowed to say.

Calvin Trillin

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BEAT THE DEVIL.

Half Century: Half Full? Half Empty? Full of It Anyway

Typing these lines two days shy of my 50th birthday I pause in search of uplifting sentiments, and my eye falls on Rob Anderson's column about the press in the *Anderson Valley Advertiser*. He cites a book review in *The Washington Monthly* by a fellow named Eric Alterman calling me "the world's . . . most infuriatingly rigid Marxist journalist."

I search myself for signs of rigidity, finding only a certain stiffness in the lower back, no doubt caused by years stooped over my desk memorizing *Capital*. I remember Alterman. He once invited me to speak at Yale. Quarter cheeky-chappie, three-quarters brown-noser.

It's hard to imagine what an infuriatingly rigid Marxist does to win the title, aside from demanding that everyone commit the *Eighteenth Brumaire* to memory. I'm flattered all the same and call the confectioner to stencil the phrase on my birthday cake. It will ease the sadness caused by the Soviet Union's decision to drop the word "Socialist" from its name. So it's no longer socialist in self-styling, probably doomed as a union, averse to soviets. Next thing you know they'll be installing a czar. Sometimes I think it's best my father died when he did. I miss the old boy but at least he was spared the sight of the Kennedy School devising the Union of Soviet Sovereign Republics' new economic program.

1917 and All That

Maybe I'm being too pessimistic. Late last year *Moscow News* ran the results of a poll conducted in September and October by the All-Union Center for the Study of Public Opinion. The sample included 1,848 people in seventeen regions of the country. Although Western journalists are normally avid to quote *Moscow News*, for some reason this story did not get much coverage.

Asked to agree or disagree with the statement that the October Revolution expressed the will of the populace of the Russian Empire, 39 percent agreed, 36 percent disagreed and 25 percent replied that it was hard to say. "Imagine," the poll asked, "that the October Revolution is happening before your eyes. You would . . ." It turned out that 22 percent would actively support the Bolsheviks; 21 percent would cooperate with the Bolsheviks in some way; 13 percent would try to bide their time, taking no part in events; 10 percent would emigrate; and 6 percent would fight the Bolsheviks. Again, 26 percent thought it was hard to say. No less than 46 percent thought a revolution was necessary to achieve the Bolsheviks' aims, as against 32 percent who thought there could have been a peaceful way to power; 52 percent thought armed seizure of power was necessary. (Sandy McCroskey, typesetting this column, asks, "Does the 'revolution' equal Lenin's hijacking of it by force?" A.C.: Yes.)

His statue may have been toppled in Addis Ababa, but Lenin still has admirers at home. He came out top of the list among names that aroused greatest sympathy, getting the thumbs up from 64 percent—well ahead of the surprise runner-up, Felix Dzerzhinsky, founder of the Cheka, who got 41 percent. On the evidence of this poll 7 percent of the people still admire Stalin more than anyone else, and 54 percent put him at the head of their hate list. More people like Stalin than Nicholas II, who has a 5 percent wedge of fans.

What the people most definitely did not care for was the closing of other parties' newspapers (56 percent said it was unnecessary), the armed suppression of peasant uprisings (64 percent said it was unnecessary) and the execution of the Czar's family (the largest group in the whole poll—77 percent—thought this was a rotten idea).

I imagine that in this atmosphere we will soon be getting a recrudescence of Anastasia theory, which held that one of the Romanovs survived the July 1918 wipeout in the Ipatiev House in Ekaterinburg, as it will no doubt soon be renamed in place of its present designation, Sverdlovsk.

One of the best-known Western correspondents in Moscow for many years was Henry Shapiro, who worked for Reuters and United Press International. Shortly after Shapiro died at the ripe age of 86 in Wisconsin earlier this year, Nicholas Daniloff published a memoir of his former colleague in *The Independent* of London. During World War II, Shapiro had visited Sverdlovsk, where he interviewed members of the Romanov execution squad, including its leader, Captain Yurovsky. Shapiro asked Yurovsky specifically whether anyone could have come through alive.

Yurovsky puffed out his chest in memory of a job well done and said No way, José. "Absolutely not," Shapiro quoted him as saying. "Everyone was killed and accounted for." Shapiro told Daniloff that he decided not to file the interview, lest it poison wartime relations between the Soviet Union and the United States.

The P.C. File: Native Intelligence

When Senator Ted Stevens started raising hell about the Smithsonian exhibition "The West As America," he got his cue from Daniel Boorstin, the former Librarian of Congress. On the first page of the visitors' comment book at the show Boorstin had scrawled "a perverse, historically inaccurate, destructive exhibition." Stevens, informed of this, opened fire.

It's not hard to see why Boorstin was incensed at a presentation that stressed the mutilation of truth by artists and photographers celebrating the opening of the West. He's seasoned in such mutilation himself and perhaps felt under unwelcome challenge when he visited the exhibition.

In *The Americans: The Democratic Experience*, Boorstin writes of Western ranchers, "Their great opportunity was to use apparently useless land that belonged to nobody." Whose history is perverse and inaccurate? Boorstin's dram of nonsense is drawn from the same poisoned well that proposed a Yellowstone uninhabited before the white man came. The natives, so the story went, held the geysers in "superstitious awe" because of their rumble and hiss, "which they imagined to be the wails and groans of departed Indian warriors suffering punishment because of their earthly sins." This rubbish was made up in the late 1870s by the park's first superintendent, Philetus Norris, who had lobbied for the expulsion of

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ALEXANDER COCKBURN

such Shoshone, Crow, Bannock and Blackfoot as remained, hoping thus to avert "in future all danger of conflict between those tribes and laborers or tourists."

In the same 1973 book Boorstin celebrates the grasses of the Western plains for their ability to survive low rates of rainfall. He sees this as a God-given phenomenon, awaiting exploitation by the ranchers. Observations of this type ignore a vast literature about the role of Indians in creating and maintaining North American grasslands, particularly across the Great Plains. In *The Roots of Dependency*, his book about the Choctaw, Pawnee and Navajo, Richard White describes how planned burning for livestock management had a marked effect on the initial growth of prairie grasses: "By eliminating the previous year's growth and excessive ground mulch, fire allows the sun to warm the earth more quickly, with the result not only that, in spring, growth comes weeks earlier, but also that yields are significantly higher from March to July, exactly the period when the Pawnees needed the grass." White adds that one grass in particular, Indian grass (*Sorghastrum nutans*), almost certainly benefited from burning since "this tall grass of the prairies greatly increases its range with regular fires."

In his absorbing book *Fire in America*, Stephen Pyne remarks that "the evidence suggests that early European colonists were generally ignorant of wildland fire and of methods to control it, just as European foresters in the nineteenth century were ignorant of prescribed burning as a silvicultural technique. It was from the Indian—into whose fire environment they moved—that the European immigrants learned basic survival skills." One of Alfred Jacob Miller's paintings from the 1830s (not in the Smithsonian exhibition) shows Indians in a village threatened by an approaching prairie fire, using blankets and brands to set and control backfires around their entire camp.

Object Lessons

Among the innumerable letters to the editor not finding their way into print in *The New York Times* was the following, sent on April 17 of this year by Geoffrey Pullum, professor of linguistics at U.C. Santa Cruz and co-editor of *Handbook of Amazonian Languages*:

> To the Editor: I doubt that I am the only reader who found Tim Golden's story on Yanomami Indian Davi Kopenawa (April 17) offensive as well as vapid and patronizing. Headlines like "Talk About Wild; Tribesman From Brazil Tours the Town" and "A jungle envoy comes to where the Manhattan tribe roamed" set the tone, and the article followed suit by dwelling on every tired cliché about indigenous South American peoples. . . . All but ignored were the real issues, like how an unacculturated Indian group with no financial resources can secure international cooperation and support in its efforts to ward off the genocide that has come to so many other Brazilian Indian groups in the past.

Golden's was a dreadfully patronizing story. The Yanomami had the misfortune some years ago to be scrutinized by the anthropologist Napoleon Chagnon, who dubbed them "the fierce people," having an innate propensity to violence. This may be a classic case of the Heisenberg effect. Another anthropologist familiar both with the Yanomami and with Chagnon avers that the Indians can be perfectly tranquil but that Chagnon has an abrasive effect upon those he meets. On this construction, sessions with Chagnon put his Yanomami informants in a vile temper, which he duly observed and ascribed to them as an endemic trait.

In 1900 the anthropologist Alfred Kroeber began a series of encounters that lasted many years with the Yurok Indians along the Klamath River in Northwestern California. He finally concluded that the Yurok were "inwardly fearful people. . . . the men often seemed to me bitter and withdrawn." Kroeber mused that "for some unknown reason, the culture had simply gone hypochondriac."

What Kroeber never mentioned was that between 1849, the start of the gold rush, and 1910 the Yurok population in that region was reduced from about 2,500 individuals to 610. Disease, starvation and murder had wiped out 75 percent of the group. Kroeber knew the facts well enough. According to Thomas Buckley, who discusses Kroeber in an interesting essay, "Suffering in the Cultural Construction of Others," in the fall 1989 *American Indian Quarterly*, Kroeber was once asked "why he had not attended to recent Yurok history and acculturation, [and] Kroeber replied that he 'could not stand all the tears' that these topics elicited from his Yurok informants." (The Yurok say that Kroeber "lied" about them, that "he got rich off us.") In Kroeber's view anthropology was a matter of "millennial sweeps and grand contours," so on a shorter chronological plane "the billions of woes and gratifications, of peaceful citizen lives or bloody deaths" were of no immediate concern. So much for the founding father of academic anthropology in California, choosing to ignore the holocaust at the precise moment that coherent reports would have been of inestimable value. There I go again. It was for making this kind of analysis that the organizers of "The West As America" got into such trouble.

Still, as Cicero wrote, "to be ignorant of what happened before you were born is to be forever a child." Jack Norton used this as the epigraph to his book *When Our Worlds Cried: Genocide in Northwestern California*. Norton quotes an 1860 article from the New York *Century*, reprinted in the same year by the San Francisco *Bulletin*:

> In the Atlantic and Western States, the Indians have suffered wrongs and cruelties at the hands of the stronger race. But history has no parallel to the recent atrocities perpetrated in California. Even the record of Spanish butcheries in Mexico and Peru has nothing so diabolical.

These days this would be derided by the cud-chewers as a toxic effusion of P.C. vapors. One hundred and thirty-one years after the *Century* took its stand, Senator Stevens seized as evidence of the evil of the Smithsonian exhibition its espousal of the pernicious view that Native Americans had been victims of genocide.

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BELTWAY BANDITS.

DAVID CORN

■ Precious Bodily Fluids

When you are President of the United States and you, your wife and your dog become sick, there is no problem mobilizing a SWAT team of environmental engineers to test the water in your present and past residences—including the current home of Vice President Dan Quayle, who demanded that the Naval Observatory be checked. The rest of America is not so fortunate, thanks to the environmental policies of the Reagan-Bush administrations.

Under the Safe Drinking Water Act, which Congress overhauled in 1986, the Environmental Protection Agency was given until 1989 to set standards for eighty-three new contaminants that can be found in tap water. Two years past the deadline the E.P.A. has got around to fifty of them. It has also been lax in insuring that drinking water is adequately monitored. Using E.P.A. data, the National Wildlife Federation calculates that about 100,000 violations of the act occur every year, affecting 38 million people. Most are failures of public water systems to test the water and determine if it is safe. But approximately 13 million people live in areas where the water supply violates an existing standard.

When the E.P.A. has issued rules to safeguard water, these often have been weak—as in the case of lead, one of the chemicals for which the Bushes' water will be tested. With fanfare the E.P.A. recently revised standards for lead, but the change falls short for the estimated 42 million people whose water contains excessive lead. The new rules allow some water systems up to twenty-four years to remove lead service lines. They also replaced a 50 parts per billion standard for lead in drinking water with an "action level" of 15 ppb. Accordingly, small and midsize water utilities will be required to take steps to eliminate lead only when 10 percent of the taps that are tested exceed the 15 ppb level. So if lead in your tap water is 50 ppb but 91 percent of the taps in your water system are below the action level, then there will be no action for you. The National Wildlife Federation, Friends of the Earth, the Environmental Defense Fund and other groups back a regulation that would allow no tap to surpass 5 ppb.

As environmental special forces swarm over the Bush and Quayle abodes, the two men ought to recall their budget request for the E.P.A.'s drinking water control program: a $4 million cut from the 1991 level of $82 million.

■ Levin Raves; Mitchell Caves

Earlier this year Senate majority leader George Mitchell introduced a campaign reform bill that provided public financing for 50 percent of the expenditures of candidates who accept spending limits. Last month, when he brought the Democratic reform bill to the floor, this provision had been shaved to just 20 percent. Advocates of campaign reform have Carl Levin, the liberal from Michigan, to thank for this. During Democratic strategy meetings prior to the floor debate, Levin led the charge against even moderate public funding. He explained to pro-reform lobbyists that he favors public financing in principle but objected to the 50 percent mark on purely political grounds. His worry, he said, was that Bush, who vowed to veto the bill, would attack Democrats for grabbing tax dollars for their campaigns. (For the record, Bush served on G.O.P. tickets in 1980, 1984 and 1988 that pocketed $140 million in public funds.)

Conservative Democrats uneasy with public financing now had the best of cover: a prominent liberal who shared their concern. Although most Democratic senators support a public funding level of 90 percent, Mitchell caved in to the vociferous protests of Levin and went with 20 percent, under which private contributions would still dominate campaigns. On the floor Levin tried to dilute the bill further by voting with Republicans to kill a provision that would have compelled broadcasters to sell ads to candidates at a 50 percent discount. This G.O.P. effort failed.

On campaign reform, Levin is a self-emasculating Democrat who has no faith in his conviction. The 20 percent better-than-nothing version passed with fifty-six votes, including Levin's. Now Democrats in the House will be given their chance to cop out on thorough campaign reform.

■ Unleash the Banks, Hogtie the Watchdogs

Here they go again. On top of giving an easy ride to the Administration's banking deregulation package (which would allow banks to expand into more risky endeavors and would promote further concentration of economic power) and to a $70 billion Bush plan to bail out commercial banks (in addition to S&Ls), some lawmakers in the House are trying to defang one of the few pro-consumer banking programs. When a House banking subcommittee recently considered the Bush deregulation scheme, Paul Kanjorski, a moderate Democrat, won approval for two amendments that weaken the Community Reinvestment Act. The C.R.A. compels regulators to evaluate a bank's level of investment in its own community, the point being to prevent disinvestment—i.e., accepting the deposits of the residents of a neighborhood but then declining to lend in the same area. Kanjorski's measures would exempt about 80 percent of the nation's banks from the C.R.A. and free the remaining banks from some of the act's restraints. His cry is a familiar one: Banks have too much paperwork. And he argues that the exempted banks are small institutions that hold less than 20 percent of assets nationwide.

Consumer and community groups aren't buying that. Under the act, local citizen groups have been able to challenge a bank's investment pattern. Often it's the small banks that need the most oversight. The Center for Community Change, which monitors C.R.A. matters, notes that of all the banks that received poor community-investment ratings, 88 percent are small institutions. While Congress is considering expanding banking powers (in a move not unlike the one that unleashed S&Ls in the early 1980s), it should not be undermining consumer participation in banking activity. The full banking committee addresses the C.R.A. issue on June 18.

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WATCHING RIGHTS.

ARYEH NEIER

Over the years Palestinians have frequently charged that they were tortured during interrogation by the Shin Bet, Israel's security police. These charges have also been made by Amnesty International and by a Palestinian human rights group, al-Haq/Law in the Service of Man. The latter has published particularly detailed accounts.

In June 1987 a commission of inquiry headed by the retired Supreme Court president Justice Moshe Landau was established by Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir. The Landau commission, which issued its report that October, found that abusive interrogation methods had been employed by the Shin Bet as a matter of policy and that the Shin Bet had systematically lied to the military courts in the West Bank and Gaza about its interrogation methods over seventeen years. But, it said, none of the agents of the Shin Bet should be prosecuted or even disciplined either for abusing detainees or for perjury. Worse, the Landau commission endorsed "non-violent psychological pressure" in the interrogation of security detainees and, if this did not suffice, "a moderate measure of physical pressure." That pressure, according to the Landau report, "must never reach the level of physical torture or the maltreatment of the suspect or grievous harm to his honor which deprives him of his human dignity."

The public portion of the Landau report did not say what "moderate physical pressure" would consist of; the specific methods were reserved for a secret addendum and there spelled out "with as much detail as possible." The entire report, including the secret addendum, was adopted by the Israeli Cabinet in November 1987.

If there has been any doubt about whether the methods employed by the Shin Bet since the Landau report warrant the label of torture, they should be dispelled by a recent report by B'Tselem, the Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories. The 151-page English-language version, titled *The Interrogation of Palestinians During the Intifada: Ill-Treatment, "Moderate Physical Pressure" or Torture?*, is among the most convincing human rights reports that I can recall reading.

B'Tselem's report describes the tortures practiced in the interrogation wings of prisons and detention centers. It should be noted that B'Tselem did not gain access to the interrogation wings. Apparently, they are off-limits to all but the detainees themselves and the Shin Bet. Middle East Watch obtained wide-ranging access to Israeli prisons and detention centers last year, but all requests to visit the interrogation wings were turned down. The International Committee of the Red Cross is permitted to see Palestinians under interrogation only after fourteen days of incommunicado detention, and then only outside the interrogation wings. Even Israeli Army, police and prison staff report that they are kept out, although they are nominally responsible for these wings. Accordingly, B'Tselem conducted lengthy, probing interviews with Palestinians, either in their homes following their release or in the regular wings of prisons in the case of those still detained. B'Tselem also published medical records of the treatment of some of the detainees, and its report summarizes the case of five deaths in detention during 1988 and 1989 that appear to have resulted directly from abuse during interrogation.

The methods employed by the Shin Bet are depressingly familiar to those aware of the techniques of torture. Prisoners are tied up for extended periods in painful positions (for example, the "al-Shabah" position, in which the wrists are tied behind the back and suspended from a pipe, with the detainee's feet barely touching the ground; or, worse, the "banana" tie); while tied up they are hooded; they are beaten on the most sensitive parts of their bodies; and so forth. Throughout, every effort is made to humiliate them. It is the torturer's mission the world over not only to inflict pain but to strip his victims of all dignity.

The publication of B'Tselem's report raises anew questions about the Landau commission's report. Once "moderate physical pressure" has been officially authorized, the likelihood of outright torture is great. For what if the detainee withstands that physical pressure? Will the first blow be followed by a second, and a third, and an endless number? If tying up in one position does not work, what about a more painful position?

If the Landau commission's report was adopted in good faith, its authors and the Israeli Cabinet members who ratified it were deceiving themselves. The alternative possibility is that they were intent on deceiving the Israeli public and the international community. What the publication of B'Tselem's report should mean is that the deception is at an end. The only way to demonstrate that the practices documented in B'Tselem's report have ended is to open up the interrogation wings. Let the International Committee of the Red Cross visit detainees—the majority held without charge—at any time wherever they are held. Let lawyers for the detainees and family members see the prisoners from the first day of detention. Open the interrogation wings to human rights groups. Bring detainees before judges as soon as possible after detention.

Sixteen members of the Knesset, Israel's Parliament, have now written to Prime Minister Shamir calling on him to respond to B'Tselem's report. At least two committees of the Knesset are scheduled to discuss the report, and separate inquiries have been announced by the Israeli military, the Shin Bet itself and an interministerial team representing the Ministry of Police, the Ministry of Justice and the Shin Bet. Also, prominent civil liberties lawyer Avigdor Feldman has initiated a process that will attempt to secure a Supreme Court ruling prohibiting the Shin Bet from following the Landau commission's recommendations.

It is too soon to know where all this will lead. What seems certain is that the prospect for curbing torture has improved greatly because B'Tselem has turned a spotlight on the dark corners of the interrogation wings in which the Shin Bet has done its dirty work. Sustained international attention to the debate launched by B'Tselem is now required to see to it that the Shin Bet is not permitted to continue to operate its torture centers.

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ARTICLES.

MEXICO'S FREE TRADERS

Salinas Repeals The Revolution

JOEL SIMON

Mexico City

On May 1 Mexico's Central Plaza—known as the Zócalo—was draped in banners and covered in confetti in celebration of international workers' day. For four hours, 1 million Mexican workers filed under the balcony of the presidential palace to receive the benediction of President Carlos Salinas de Gortari, Mexico's champion of the free market. In March Salinas had toured the United States with finely crafted arguments to rally support for his free-trade proposals, but at home he relied on cruder means.

Despite the fact that Salinas has cut government jobs, held a tight clamp on the minimum wage of under $4 a day and allowed prices of basic food staples to rise 50 percent by pulling out subsidies, workers doffed their caps or greeted the President with a friendly wave as they passed by the reviewing stand. Through the political alchemy typical of the sixty-two-year-old Mexican regime, what used to be a day for the President to honor the workers has been converted into a day for the workers to honor the President.

The parade seemed to mark the full recovery of Mexico's hegemonic political system from its low point three years ago. The 1988 election, which brought Salinas to power, was the closest, most contentious election in postrevolution Mexico, and it was in large part the urban workers, battered by a ten-year economic slide, who rose up against the government. But in his two and a half years in power, Salinas has quelled the rebellion and consolidated his political program. Even though Salinas's economic reforms have produced the most profound transformation of Mexican society since the revolution, organized opposition to his policies and programs has virtually disappeared.

For Salinas supporters the lack of protest is easy to explain. They point out that after years of negative growth, the Salinas administration has brought two years of economic expansion. After a decade of austerity implemented in order to allow Mexico to make payments on its $95 billion debt, the country is getting ready to cash in its chips. Mexico's comparative advantage is its low wages—artificially suppressed for four years through an accord with labor leaders. The free-trade agreement with the United States will bring an avalanche of investment and jobs, say government officials.

"Free trade will bring new factories, new jobs and better salaries," asserted Fidel Velázquez, the 91-year-old leader of the government-allied Confederation of Mexican Workers, during a workers' day interview. "I am confident that Mexico would never sign any treaty that is in conflict with its interests."

But the workers who showed up for the labor-day parade were not necessarily there because they supported free trade; many came because their unions would have docked their pay if they stayed home. In order to keep protesters who disagreed with the government line away from the festivities, all downtown Metro stops were closed and the streets leading to the Zócalo were barricaded by police.

Meanwhile, counterdemonstrations organized by various dissident, independent unions were outnumbered by riot police. Leaders who had signed an agreement with the authorities not to begin their march to the Zócalo until 3 P.M., when the official parade ended, were widely accused of taking money from the government. Instead of fighting the government, most of the unions spent the day fighting one another, including one embarrassing struggle over a microphone.

Through a careful combination of coercion, co-optation and repression, Mexico's ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) employed its age-old formula to bring out a display of public support for a policy that had been determined by the leadership to be in the people's best interests. The May Day parade, noted the prominent author and columnist Carlos Monsivais, was not a celebration of the alliance between the state and the workers but rather a public display of workers' submission and obedience to the will of the state. "When workers are exploited and humiliated but they don't protest, that is the end of my capacity to comment on the future of this country or to speak in the name of the Mexican people," said Monsivais. "I understood what happened in '88 but I don't understand this. I'm at a moment of confusion."

Monsivais could have been speaking for his own party—the Party of the Democratic Revolution (P.R.D.), which seems equally baffled by the rapid changes in Mexico's political climate [see Paco Ignacio Taibo II, "*Cardenismo* in Mexico: A New Politics With Deep Roots," December 17, 1990].

The P.R.D. was formed in the wake of the 1988 presidential elections by Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, governor of the state of Michoacán from 1980 to 1986 and son of Mexico's most beloved President, Gen. Lázaro Cárdenas. Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas's campaign for president nearly ended the PRI's decades-long stranglehold on power. Cárdenas, who quit the PRI in 1986 to protest a lack of internal democracy in the ruling party, became the alternative for a population fed up with economic stagnation, corruption and undemocratic rule. Fraud was widely reported in the 1988 election, and Cárdenas still insists he was the rightful victor.

The formation of the P.R.D. after the elections seemed to mark the beginning of an era of competitive politics in Mexico. In municipal elections in Cárdenas's home state of Michoacán and in the nearby state of Guerrero in December 1989, the P.R.D. earned widespread support. Tired of the

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PRI's corrupt regional bosses and angry that the end of government price supports had made farming unprofitable, many threw their support behind the P.R.D. The government sent in the army to dislodge protesters who occupied town halls to protest vote fraud.

But in the past two years, the P.R.D. has lost ground to the PRI and Cárdenas has lost his political luster. Stung by high-level desertions, by the lack of grass-roots organization and a clear political platform, and by constant defamation by the PRI, the P.R.D. has been unable to turn the popular discontent of 1988 into a political movement.

The P.R.D.'s declining political fortunes were evident during state elections in Morelos in March. Cárdenas was able to draw only 200 supporters in each town he visited when he campaigned on behalf of local P.R.D. candidates a week before the election. In the town of La Lagunilla, a Cárdenas rally was outdrawn by a march to honor the town beauty queen. That celebration, ostensibly nonpolitical, was organized by local PRI officials. Despite the fact that Cárdenas won about 55 percent in Morelos in the 1988 presidential elections, the P.R.D. was badly embarrassed on Election Day. The PRI took thirty-two of the thirty-three mayoral slots and all twelve seats in the state assembly. In some instances the PRI used intimidation and fraud but the P.R.D. was unable to organize to secure a fair vote.

The collapse of the P.R.D. represents more than a political victory for Salinas—it marks the success of his plan to reform Mexican political culture and to wean the PRI away from its revolutionary roots. Such a radical transformation is necessary in order for Salinas to implement his free-trade program, which contradicts the founding ideals of his party and the historic principles of Mexican national identity. For fifty-nine years, from its founding in 1929 by Plutarco Calles until the election of Salinas, the PRI presented itself as the party of the Mexican revolution. But Salinas talks little of the revolution; it does not provide a flattering mirror for his administration.

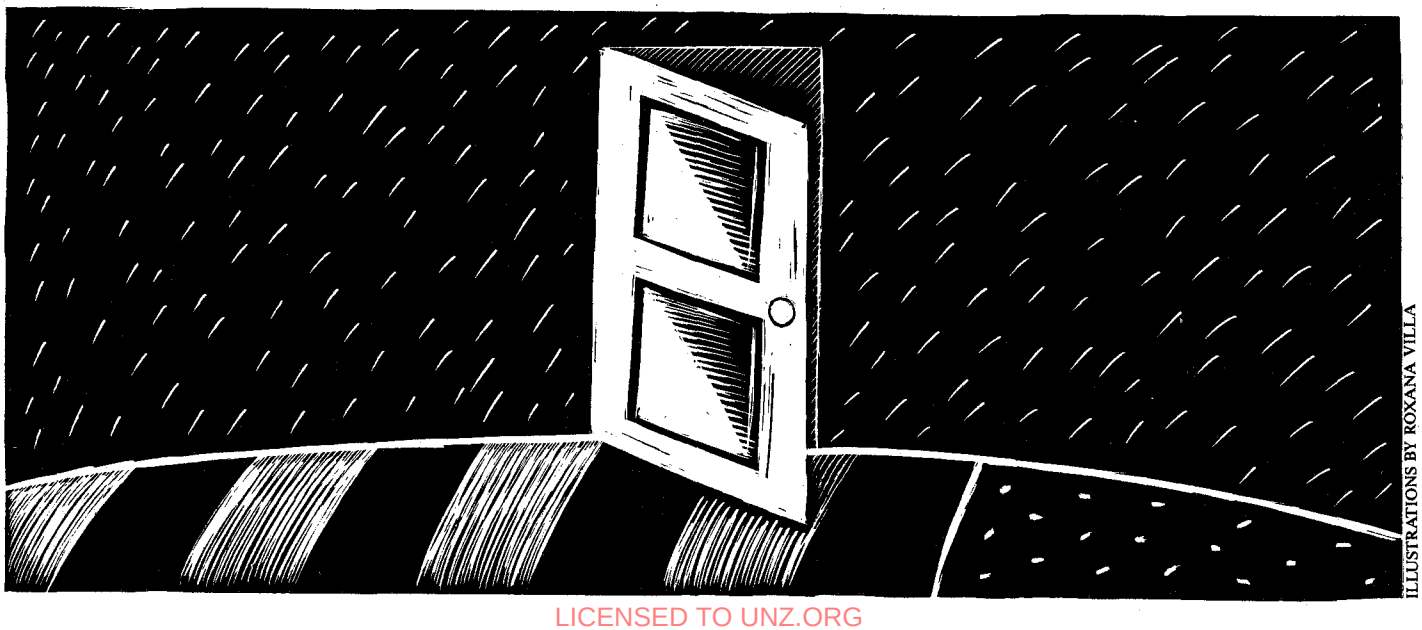
While previous presidents justified their programs of economic nationalism, protectionism, pro-Third World foreign policy and anti-U.S. bluster in the name of the revolution, Salinas's economic program most closely resembles that of Porfirio Díaz, the dictator who was overthrown in the 1910 uprising. Like Salinas, Díaz believed that foreign investment would bring Mexico into the developed world.

It is Cárdenas, then, who has taken up the banner of the revolution relinquished by Salinas and who has sought to exploit the parallel to Díaz. This is not surprising, since Cárdenas's father, a general in the revolutionary army, instituted Mexico's most extensive land reform and nationalized the country's oil industry when he was President from 1934 to 1940. "Salinas is destroying the laws and institutions of the revolution one by one," said Cárdenas in a recent interview.

In small towns Cárdenas speaks of protecting the gains of agrarian reform. He opposes Salinas's privatization of state companies and pledges to fight to insure that the oil his father nationalized remains Mexican forever. Cárdenas has, however, modified his position on the free-trade agreement from outright opposition to modified support. He now says he would back a treaty as long as it is part of a social contract that includes immigration reforms, guarantees of investment in Mexican infrastructure and compensation for displaced workers.

The problem is that by constantly invoking the revolution to justify his program, Cárdenas is relying on a version of history invented and propagated by the PRI for its own purposes. The Mexican revolution did not, as the PRI's official version of history maintains, liberate the country from foreign domination and save the poor from oblivion. In addition to a struggle for national liberation, the revolution was also a regional power struggle, and it was the moderates, not the radicals like Emiliano Zapata, who triumphed.

Many of the revolutionary leaders out of whom the PRI has created a national pantheon were mortal enemies of one another. Zapata, whose statue graces many a Mexican plaza, was murdered on the orders of Venustiano Carranza, who appears on the 100-peso coin. Carranza, who defeated Pancho Villa in battle, may have later had him assassinated as well. Carranza in turn was murdered—perhaps on the orders of his successor, Alvaro Obregón, another official hero.



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But Salinas no longer justifies his policies in the name of the revolution and has no need to romanticize it. He has, in fact, sold off or undermined the very symbols of the revolution, from privatizing the Cananea copper mine (where a key strike of the revolution occurred) to exploring relations with the Vatican (the revolution had a strong anticlerical thrust) to pursuing free trade with the gringos.

While the P.R.D. still clings to the revolutionary rhetoric abandoned by the PRI, it seems to hold little appeal for a population that has heard the PRI talk the same way—and do nothing—for sixty-three years. Meanwhile, Salinas has neutralized the right-of-center National Action Party (PAN), which has long called for free trade, by taking over its political program. The PAN has strong regional support but represents little threat to the PRI on a national level.

The extent to which Mexicans have diverged from their revolutionary roots is indicated by a recent poll published in a new magazine called *Este País* (This Country). The poll reported that only 54 percent of Mexicans were "very proud" of their nationality (as compared with 73 percent of Americans), 59 percent would be willing to form one country with the United States if this would improve their quality of life and 87 percent favor free trade (77 percent favor it if no jobs will be lost).

Such changes in attitude can be attributed in part to Mexico's ten-year economic crisis and to greater contact with the United States through movies, television and immigration. It's also best to keep in mind that polls are often unreliable in a society whose population fears publicly dissenting from the government. But while the numbers seem to indicate a vote of confidence, Salinas isn't taking any chances. He continues to rely on the PRI's traditional mechanisms, for example, to bring a million people to the Zócalo on May Day.

Salinas still relies on coercion and repression—but it is clear he also has genuine support. And while here and there Salinas's opponents still contend that massive foreign investment will lead to a repeat of the 1910 revolution, he is more worried that, after all the promises he has made, free trade will not in fact bring a tidal wave of foreign investment and growth. The success of his program, as Salinas well knows, depends less on the backing of his own people than on financial support from U.S. investors. That is why Salinas is pitching free trade not to Mexico but to Washington. □

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PROBING 'OCTOBER SURPRISE'

Leads Congress Should Pursue

DAVID CORN

Conspiracies occur in the real world and leave traces. That is what legislators and aides on Capitol Hill should keep in mind as they ponder whether to conduct a thorough inquiry into the allegation that Ronald Reagan's 1980 presidential campaign staff cut a secret deal with representatives of the revolutionary Iranian government. The essence of the supposed agreement is simple: The Iranians, according to the charge, held on to the U.S. hostages (thus preventing an "October surprise" release that would buoy President Jimmy Carter's re-election bid) and, in return, the Reaganites promised to forward arms to Iran should they win the White House.

On both sides of the Hill, there are members and staff interested in pursuing an investigation, but caution rules. "People here are afraid that if they look they might find something," says one Senate aide, "and they are intensely worried about the politics." At the request of at least one Democratic member of the House, the General Accounting Office engaged in some digging, but its efforts came to a halt when the Secret Service refused to turn over records, said an official familiar with the episode. House staff aides then quietly began a preliminary examination that may or may not blossom into a full-fledged investigation. During a private meeting with House staff members, Gary Sick, a former National Security Council (N.S.C.) aide under Carter whose April 15 Op-Ed article in *The New York Times* supported the "October surprise" charges, reported that he had come across unconfirmed "indications" that Robert Gates, President Bush's nominee to become Director of Central Intelligence, knew of the plot. In a recent interview, Sick said that he will not publicly speak about this unless he can obtain better evidence. The Senate Intelligence Committee, which is considering the Gates nomination, has not displayed interest in this possible connection, according to a Senate aide. On May 9, four senators—Brock Adams, Alan Cranston, Tom Harkin and Paul Wellstone—did ask majority leader George Mitchell to initiate a probe of the "October surprise" allegation. As of June 6, they had received no response.

Currently, the best evidence in support of the "October surprise" is circumstantial—much of it sourced to unsaintly individuals who inhabit the murky world of arms dealers and spooks. But there's enough to warrant an official inquiry. The allegation, if true, means the Reagan and Bush administrations were conceived in treason. The charge should be officially confirmed or laid to rest. Investigators will not lack for leads, and here is a list of material that a subpoena-brandishing investigation should seek:

§ the phone and credit-card records of the deceased William Casey. As Reagan's campaign director, Casey allegedly

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traveled to Madrid and Paris to bargain with the Iranians. If there was a conspiracy, its architect would have been Casey. All his personal and campaign records should be scrutinized. Telephone records might reflect his engagement in any international negotiations. Credit card receipts might reveal his whereabouts at certain times.

§ records of the 1980 Reagan campaign. This would include all diaries and schedules of Casey. Investigators will want to check any documents related to the "October surprise" committees, which the campaign established—at the least—to monitor the hostage situation and track any potential second rescue attempt. George Bush's schedule should be examined. Congressional investigators should scrutinize all documents relating to the activities of Richard Allen and Laurence Silberman, campaign aides who met in a Washington hotel with an Iranian who offered to arrange for the release of the hostages to the Reagan forces. (Allen maintains he left after a short time and pursued the matter no further.) The Reagan campaign files are housed at the Reagan Library in California; their trustee is Edwin Meese 3d, who served on one of the "October surprise" committees and went on to become Attorney General. He has turned down reporters' requests for access to the archives. Let him try to refuse a subpoena.

§ the business and personal phone records of Allen, Silberman and former National Security Adviser Robert McFarlane. McFarlane, then an aide to Senator John Tower, also attended the 1980 meeting between Allen, Silberman and the Iranian. Investigators must try to determine the identity of this Iranian. They also should ask how he was able to obtain an audience with three such important and busy people.

§ all Secret Service records showing Bush's whereabouts in the months before the election. The allegation that he attended a secret Paris meeting in October 1980 (the President stoutly denies it) may well be a red herring. But it should be checked. The G.A.O., an arm of Congress, was stymied. Congress should do what it takes to get that material. In addition, Bush's personal records could be subpoenaed.

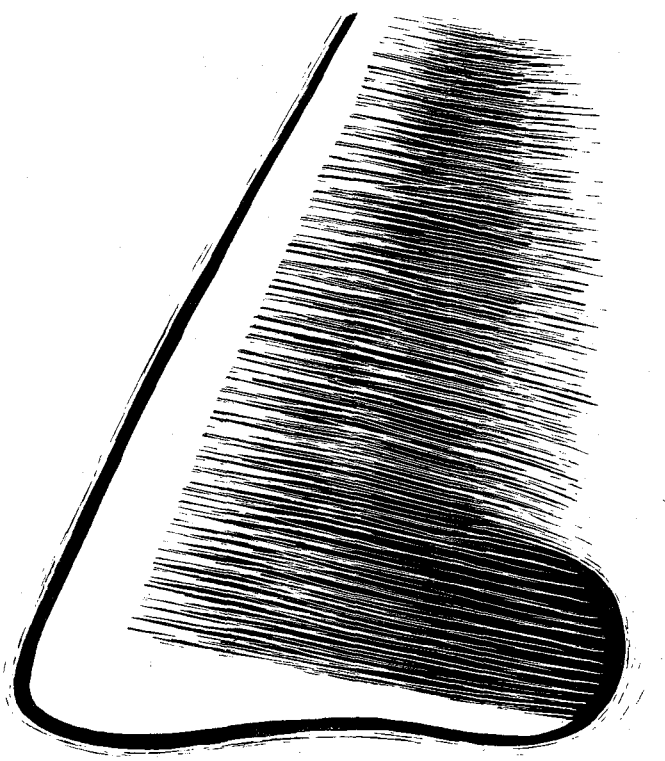
§ hotel and travel records. Congressional investigators should fly to Madrid and Paris—where Casey and other Reagan supporters allegedly met with Iranians—and study hotel registers and Customs records. They should look up the flight plans for all private jets in and out of the nearby airports on the relevant dates and be on the watch for flights to and from the Washington area. Although any savvy conspirator travels under a fake name, investigators should search for any mention of Casey or Donald Gregg, an N.S.C. staff member for Carter who became an aide to Vice President Bush and is now Ambassador to South Korea. Gregg, the story goes, accompanied Casey to the Paris rendezvous. (His phone and credit-card records should be studied, as well as office documents that might demonstrate when he was out of his office and whether he was in contact with the Reagan campaign while he served on Carter's N.S.C.) The investigators should also look for tracks left in Madrid and Paris by any of the following: Cyrus and Jamshid Hashemi, two arms-dealing brothers (Cyrus is now dead) who claimed to have been involved in the negotiations; Mehdi Karrubi, an Iranian official who might have been Casey's opposite number in the talks; and Mohammed Beheshti and Hashemi Rafsanjani, two Iranian leaders accused of being involved in the covert deliberations.

§ the personal phone and credit-card records of the Hashemi brothers and other arms dealers and pilots who claim to have had a hand in the "October surprise" plot. For example, Jamshid Hashemi says he and his brother met with Casey in late February or early March 1980 in the Mayflower Hotel in Washington. If Hashemi was in town then, some document should demonstrate that.

§ top-secret communications intercepts. Investigators truly willing to get to the bottom of the affair would seek access to communications intercepts picked up in 1980 by the National Security Agency, which monitors international phone calls. Such a request surely would be vigorously opposed.

That is just for starters. Investigators should collect sworn testimony from all the principals and second-tier players who may have picked up a whiff of some scheme. That lineup would include the Iranian officials supposedly involved, though it hardly seems in their interest to talk about their secret geopolitical machinations. Congressional staff members should also knock on the door of Bassam Abu Sharif, a Palestine Liberation Organization official who claimed to have proof of the "October surprise." Gary Sick maintains that two former Israeli intelligence officers told him they knew of the deal. The U.S. taxpayers should pay for the airfare so investigators can collect their testimony.

Conspiracies consist of a series of discrete actions; investigators should therefore attempt to find physical evidence that confirms any one of the chain of events that must have happened if the "October surprise" was a reality. A Congressional investigation is unlikely to unearth a smoking-gun memorandum ("From: Casey/To: Rafsanjani"). As Casey once remarked to Oliver North, if you have to write things down, you



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don't belong in the business. Still, investigators should not be put off by Casey's reputation as the consummate spymaster who wielded an invisible hand. After all, he was not able to wipe all his fingerprints off the Iran/*contra* scandal.

Members of Congress should not embark on an inquiry into the "October surprise" allegations unless they are prepared to go the distance. If the charge is accurate, they can expect to run into a series of stonewalls. Lawmakers will need plenty of backbone to do what is needed to resolve the issue. Americans who care about the legitimacy of their government deserve no less. □

NUDITY AND FREE SPEECH

Will the Court Bare All?

WILLIAM O'ROURKE

This summer the Supreme Court will deliver a decision in *Barnes v. Glen Theatre*, as the case will be called in legal shorthand. It, like many others, is a small-town case making good. So good, the local prosecutor in St. Joseph County, Indiana, Michael Barnes, whose name the case bears, flew to Washington to attend the argument before the Supreme Court on January 8. "I initiated this," the *South Bend Tribune* quotes Barnes as proudly proclaiming. "I wanted to be there." But Barnes didn't quite initiate this First Amendment case; lawyers and a dancer for a South Bend establishment called the Chippewa Drive-In and Bookstore started it by challenging the constitutionality of Indiana's public indecency statute. What Barnes had been doing was prosecuting nude dancers.

Indiana has a rather broad public indecency law, which holds, among other things, "nudity" to be "the showing of the human male or female genitals, pubic area, or buttocks with less than opaque covering, the showing of the female breast with less than a fully opaque covering of any part of the nipple, or the showing of the covered male genitals in a discernibly turgid state." The local authorities had been using that law to enforce selectively (no nursing mothers have been handcuffed on buses yet) the state's notions of public morality. No one is charging obscenity here; it is nudity that causes the problem. The wearing of pasties and G-strings is, it seems, a required badge of public morality in Indiana. Such minimalist outfits are sexual euphemisms, and authorities often prefer strategically placed euphemisms to naked reality.

Gayle Sutro, a dancer booked to appear at the Chippewa, holds nude dancing to be speech; in an affidavit, Sutro claimed (I am quoting from the district court's Memorandum and Order) "her nude dances are appropriately choreographed and are an attempt to communicate as well as to entertain." Sutro and Glen Theatre Inc. (owners of the Chippewa) attained an injunction in 1985 against the threatened application of the public indecency statute. Six years later Michael Barnes got to travel to Washington.

During those years, another establishment joined the case: the Kitty Kat Lounge, a South Bend go-go bar, one of a number along a strip leading into the south side of town. All these bars exist in the shadows made by empty factory buildings (Studebaker, Wheel Horse and South Bend Lathe, among others) of the city's rapidly disappearing industrial base.

The Kitty Kat Lounge and the Chippewa Bookstore are different sorts of establishments. At the Chippewa, Gayle Sutro planned to dance nude behind glass panels. No liquor is served or allowed. Patrons could watch her dance by inserting money into what court documents call a "timing mechanism." In the various hearings and court appearances, the dancers (Darlene Miller represented the Kitty Kat) weren't the most articulate spokespersons for their art. Sutro's affidavit lists her credentials as a "professional actress, stunt woman and ecdysiast" who "has studied acting, dancing, speech and language," but she is not quoted in court documents further elaborating any notions she might have about dance as expression. Miller stated that she sees herself as "just entertaining, just dancing." Such laconism on the part of the dancers has led the judges involved to a great outpouring of language on the subject. On May 24, 1990, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit decided 7 to 4 in favor of the dancers, ruling that nonobscene nude dancing is entitled to limited protection under the First Amendment and that Indiana's public indecency statute was accordingly unconstitutional.

For some time the Supreme Court has had an interest in deciding this question, because state courts disagree over the reach of the First Amendment in this area. In a 1975 case (*Doran v. Salem Inn*) the Court held that "although the customary 'barroom' type of nude dancing may involve only the barest minimum of protected expression . . . this form of entertainment might be entitled to First and Fourteenth Amendment protection in some circumstances." The status of nude dancing had remained unsettled, and that is why the Supreme Court took on the South Bend case.

Judge Richard Posner, one of the Seventh Circuit's majority, writes, "I am less interested in particular decisions than in fundamental principle. If the only expression that the First Amendment protects is the expression of ideas and opinions, then most music and visual art, and much of literature, are unprotected. This would be a shocking contraction of the First Amendment as it has come to be understood. If the only way to exclude nude dancing from the protection of the amendment is to exclude all nonpolitical art and literature as well, the price is too high."

The Seventh Circuit's dissenting judges claim (here quoting Judge Frank Easterbrook) that "go-go dancing is not speech. James Madison would have guffawed had anyone suggested public nudity as an example of 'freedom of speech.' " James Madison would also have laughed himself sick at the idea that women should have the right to vote, and he very likely wouldn't have contemplated the idea of dancing as speech, either. (The State of Indiana clung to its position when the case was argued before the Supreme Court. When Justice An-

William O'Rourke's last novel was Criminal Tendencies. *He is working on a new novel,* Notts.

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thony Kennedy asked if go-go dancing lacked protection because the dancers were not good enough, Deputy Attorney General Wayne Uhl replied, "Go-go dancing could be good or bad, but in neither case is it speech.")

Writing for the Seventh Circuit's majority, Judge Joel Flaum said, "The State in effect advances the proposition that the dance involved loses its expressive qualities as the dancers lose their clothing. It is well established, however, that '[n]udity alone does not place otherwise protected material outside the mantle of the first amendment.' *Schad* (1981). Nor does the fact that the dance is sexual remove the mantle of protection: 'Sexual expression which is indecent, but not obscene is protected by the First Amendment.' *Sable Communications v. FCC* (1989)." A lot of the verbal dueling will be and has been done in the not-so-empty clearing that the phrase "otherwise protected material" carves out for itself. The dissenting judges do not see nude dancing as an activity that warrants protection.

Judge Posner, in his concurring majority opinion, attempts to understand the dissenting judges' motives; he writes, "The true reason I think for wanting to exclude striptease dancing from the protection of the First Amendment is not any of the lawyers' classification games that I have been discussing, such as expression versus nonexpression, ideas versus emotions, art versus entertainment, or speech versus conduct. It is a feeling that the proposition, 'the First Amendment forbids the State of Indiana to require striptease dancers to cover their nipples,' is ridiculous." I think Judge Posner is being a bit too understanding of his colleagues. "Lawyers' classification games" do play a large role; important questions of behavior and speech, conduct and manner are hotly contested constitutional terrain. Dissenting Seventh Circuit judges quote Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia often and admiringly: "The more limited guarantee of freedom of expression," Scalia wrote in *Community for Creative Non-Violence v. Watt* (1984) when he was on the District of Columbia's U.S. Court of Appeals, "does not apply to accidental intrusion upon expressiveness but only to purposeful restraint of expression. It would not invalidate a law generally prohibiting the extension of limbs from the windows of moving vehicles; it would invalidate a law prohibiting only the extension of clenched fists." Scalia would have the dancers clench their fists.

Nude dancing is not the sort of First Amendment activity that ignites much public outrage at the thought of its potential curtailment. There has not been an outpouring of support for nude dancers from the dance world or from the arts world in general. Gayle Sutro is no Karen Finley. The friend-of-the-court briefs filed in behalf of the dancers have been few: the A.C.L.U., joined by the Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts, offered one, as did the Georgia On Premise & Lounge Association Inc., a trade association, along with a third filed by a group headed by People for the American Way.

When nude dancing is done in a high-rent zone (opera or ballet, for example) it is afforded some respectability. In the lower courts' opinions there is a good bit of class derision in the language used, with scoffing comments about "*hoi polloi*" and "Joe Sixpack." The audience for nude dancing is derided as much, if not more, than the dancers.

But at the Supreme Court, Justice Kennedy asked Indiana's Deputy Attorney General about who decides what forms of dancing are constitutionally protected. "Who's to do this?" he said. "Is the legislature to do this? Are we to do this?"

Even if the Court upholds the Seventh Circuit's opinion, which is likely, it will nonetheless probably fashion language for states to use in order to write laws that would not only prohibit nude dancing but could further whittle away the protection of expression in general by expanding (if by no more than the size of a G-string) what can be labeled conduct and not speech. And if the Supreme Court goes all the way and declares nude dancing not to be protected expression, it will be drawing a line—not in sand, as George Bush did, but in flesh. And, if they get their ounce, how long will it be before they come for their pound? □

Palm Beach

(*Continued From Front Cover*)

Soma Golden said that the *Times* could not be held responsible for "every weird mind that reads [the paper]." NBC News chief Michael Gartner was more direct: "Who she is is material in this. . . . You try to give viewers as many facts as you can and let them make up their minds." Forget that almost none of these "facts" will be admissible in court, where a jury will nonetheless be expected to render a verdict.

In the ensuing furor, just about every advocate for rape victims has spoken out in favor of preserving the longstanding media custom of anonymity, and in large part the public seems to agree. But the media,* acting in its capacity as the guardian of public interest, has decided that naming the victim is an issue up for grabs. And so we are having one of those endless, muddled, two-sides-to-every-question debates that, by ignoring as many facts as possible and by weighing all arguments equally, gives us that warm American feeling that truth must lie somewhere in the middle. Anna Quindlen, meet Alan Dershowitz. Thank you very much, but our time is just about up.

Sometimes, of course, the truth does lie somewhere in the middle. But not this time. There is no good reason to publish the names of rape complainants without their consent, and many compelling reasons not to. The arguments advanced in favor of publicity reveal fundamental misconceptions about both the nature of the media and the nature of rape.

Let's take a look at what proponents of naming are saying.

§ *The media has a duty to report what it knows.* Where have you been? The media keeps information secret all the time. Sometimes it does so on the ground of "taste," a waffle-word that means whatever an editorial board wants it to mean. Thus, we hear about (some of) the sexual high jinks of heterosexual celebrities but not about those of socially equivalent closet-dwellers, whose opposite-sex escorts are portrayed, with knowing untruthfulness, as genuine romantic interests.

*I use "media" in the singular (rather than the strictly grammatical plural) because I am talking about the communications industry as a social institution that, while hardly monolithic (as the debate over naming shows), transcends the different means—"media" plural—by which the news is conveyed.

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We are spared—or deprived of, depending on your point of view—the gruesome and salacious details of many murders. (Of all the New York dailies, only *Newsday* reported that notorious Wall Street wife-killer Joseph Pikul was wearing women's underwear when arrested. Not fit to print? I was *riveted.*) Sometimes it fudges the truth to protect third parties from embarrassment, which is why the obituaries would have us believe that eminent young bachelors are dying in large numbers only from pneumonia.

And of course sometimes it censors itself in "the national interest." The claim that the media constitutes a fourth estate, a permanent watchdog, if not outright adversary, of the government, has always been a self-serving myth. Watergate occurred almost twenty years ago and has functioned ever since as a kind of sentimental talisman, like Charles Foster Kane's Rosebud sied. As we saw during the gulf war, the media can live, when it chooses, quite comfortably with government-imposed restrictions. Neither NBC nor *The New York Times*, so quick to supply their audiences with the inside scoop on the Palm Beach woman, felt any such urgency about Operation Desert Storm.

The media itself argues in favor of anonymity when that serves its own purposes.

§ *Anonymous charges are contrary to the American way.* Anonymous charges are contrary to American *jurisprudence.* The Palm Beach woman has not made an anonymous accusation. Her name is known to the accused and his attorney, and if the case comes to trial, she will have to appear publicly in court, confront the defendant, give testimony and be cross-examined. But the media is not a court, as the many lawyers who have made this argument—most prominently Alan Dershowitz and Isabelle Pinzler of the American Civil Liberties Union's Women's Rights Project—ought to know.

The media itself argues in favor of anonymity when that serves its own purposes. Reporters go to jail rather than reveal their sources, even when secrecy means protecting a dangerous criminal, impeding the process of justice or denying a public figure the ability to confront his or her accusers. People wouldn't talk to reporters, the press claims, if their privacy couldn't be guaranteed—the same greater-social-good argument it finds unpersuasive when made about rape victims and their reluctance to talk, unprotected, to the police. The media's selective interest in concealment, moreover, undermines its vaunted mission on behalf of the public's right to know. Might not the identity of an anonymous informant (one of those "sources close to the White House" or "highly placed observers," for instance) help the public "make up its mind" about the reliability of the statements? I don't want to digress here into the complex issue of protecting sources, but there can be little question that the practice allows powerful people, in and out of government, to manipulate information for their own ends. Interestingly, the *Times* story on the Palm Beach woman concealed (thirteen times!) the names of those spreading malicious gossip about her, despite the *Times*'s own custom of not using anonymous pejoratives. That custom was resuscitated in time for the paper's circumspect profile of William Smith, which did not detail the accusations against him of prior acquaintance rapes that have been published by *The National Enquirer* and the gossip columnist Taki, and which referred only vaguely to "rumors" of "a pattern of aggressiveness toward women in private." (These, the *Times* said, it could not confirm—unlike the accuser's "little wild streak.")

How *did* the *Times* manage to amass such a wealth of dirt about the Palm Beach woman so quickly? It's hard to picture the reporter, distinguished China hand Fox Butterfield, peeking into the window of her house to see what books were on her toddler's shelf. Could some of his information or some of his leads have come, directly or circuitously, from the detectives hired by the Kennedy family to investigate the woman and her friends—detectives who, let's not forget, have been the subject of complaints of witness intimidation? The *Times* denies it, but rumors persist. One could argue that, in this particular case, *how* the *Times* got the story was indeed part of the story—perhaps the most important part.

That anonymity is held to be essential to the public good in a wide variety of cases but is damned as a form of censorship in the Palm Beach case shows that what the media is concerned with is not the free flow of information *or* the public good. What is at stake is the media's status, power and ability to define and control information in accordance with the views of those who run the media.

Consider, for example, the case of men convicted of soliciting prostitutes. Except for the occasional athlete, such men receive virtual anonymity in the press. Remember the flap in 1979 when Manhattan D.A. Robert Morgenthau released a list of recently convicted johns and the *Daily News* and two local radio stations went public with it? Universal outrage! Never mind that solicitation is a crime, that convictions are a matter of public record, that the wives and girlfriends of these men might find knowledge of such arrests extremely useful or that society has a declared interest in deterring prostitution. Alan Dershowitz, who in his syndicated column has defended both the content of the *Times* profile and its use of the woman's name, vigorously supported privacy for johns, and in fact made some of the same arguments that he now dismisses. Reporting, he said, was vindictive, subjected ordinary people to the glaring light of publicity for a peccadillo, could destroy the johns' marriages and reputations, and stigmatized otherwise decent people. Dershowitz did not, however, think privacy for johns meant privacy for prostitutes: They, he argued, have no reputation to lose. Although solicitation is a two-person crime, Dershowitz thinks the participants have unequal rights to privacy. With rape, he treats the rapist and his victim as *equally* placed with regard to privacy, even though rape is a one-person crime.

§ *But here the woman's identity was already widely known.* Well, I didn't know it. I did, however, know the name of the

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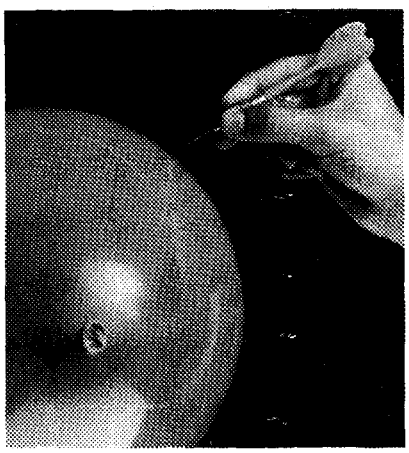

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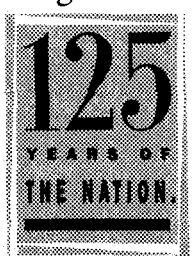

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Central Park jogger—like virtually every other journalist in the country, the entire readership of *The Amsterdam News* (50,000) and the listening audience of WLIB radio (45,000). Anna Quindlen, in her courageous column dissenting from the *Times*'s profile naming the Palm Beach woman, speculated that roughly equivalent large numbers of people knew the identity of the jogger as knew that of William Smith's alleged victim before NBC and the *Times* got into the act. Yet the media went to extraordinary lengths to protect the remaining shreds of the jogger's privacy—film clips were blipped, quotes censored.

What separates the jogger from the Palm Beach woman? You don't have to be the Rev. Al Sharpton to suspect that protecting the jogger's identity was more than a chivalrous gesture. Remember that she too was originally blamed for her assault: What was she doing in the park so late? Who did she think she was? It's all feminism's fault for deluding women into thinking that their safety could, or should, be everywhere guaranteed. But partly as a result of the severity of her injuries, the jogger quickly became the epitome of the innocent victim, the symbol, as Joan Didion pointed out in *The New York Review of Books*, for New York City itself (white, prosperous, plucky) endangered by the black underclass. A white Wellesley graduate with a Wall Street job attacked out of nowhere by a band of violent black strangers and, because of her comatose state, unable even to bring a rape complaint—this, to the media, is "real rape." The Palm Beach woman, on the other hand, is of working-class origins, a single mother, a frequenter of bars, who went voluntarily to her alleged attacker's house (as who, in our star-struck society, would not?). The jogger could have been the daughter of the men who kept her name out of the news. But William Smith could have been their son.

As the* Times *profile shows, naming cannot be divorced from blaming.

§ *Rape is like other crimes and should be treated like other crimes. Isn't that what you feminists are always saying?* As the coverage of the Palm Beach case proves, rape isn't treated like other crimes. There is no other crime in which the character, behavior and past of the complainant are seen as central elements in determining whether a crime has occurred. There are lots of crimes that could not take place without carelessness, naïveté, ignorance or bad judgment on the part of the victims: mail fraud ("Make $100,000 at home in your spare time!"), confidence games and many violent crimes as well. But when my father was burglarized after forgetting to lock the cellar door, the police did not tell him he had been asking for it. And when an elderly lady (to cite Amy Pagnozzi's example in the *New York Post*) is defrauded of her life savings by a con artist, the con artist is just as much a thief as if he'd broken into his victim's safe-deposit box. "The complainant showed incredibly bad judgment, Your Honor," is not a legal defense.

Why is rape different? Because lots of people, too often including the ones in the jury box, think women really do want to be forced into sex, or by acting or dressing or drinking in a certain way, give up the right to say no, or are the sort of people (i.e., not nuns) who gave up the right to say no to one man by saying yes to another, or are by nature scheming, irrational and crazy. They also think men cannot be expected to control themselves, are entitled to take by force what they cannot get by persuasion and are led on by women who, because they are scheming, irrational and crazy, change their minds in mid-sex. My files bulge with stories that show how widespread these beliefs are: the Wisconsin judge who put a child molester on probation because he felt the 3-year-old female victim had acted provocatively; the Florida jury that exonerated a rapist because his victim was wearing disco attire; and so on.

In a bizarre column defending Ted Kennedy's role on the night in question, William Safire took aim at the Palm Beach woman, who was "apparently" not "taught that drinking all night and going to a man's house at 3:30 A.M. places one in what used to be called an occasion of sin." (All her mother's fault, as usual.) The other woman present in the Kennedy mansion that night, a waitress named Michelle Cassone, has made herself a mini-celebrity by telling any reporter who will pay for her time that she too believes that women who drink and date, including herself, are "fair game."

By shifting the debate to the question of merely naming victims, the media pre-empts a discussion of the way it reports all crimes with a real or imaginary sexual component. But as the *Times* profile shows, naming cannot be divorced from blaming. When the victim is young and attractive (and in the tabloids *all* female victims are attractive), the sexual element in the crime is always made its central feature—even when, as in the case of Marla Hanson, the model who was slashed by hired thugs and whose character was savaged in *New York*, there is no sexual element. I mean no belittlement of rape to suggest it was one of the lesser outrages visited on the Central Park jogger. She was also beaten so furiously she lost 80 percent of her blood and suffered permanent physical, neurological and cognitive damage. Yet, paradoxically, it was the rape that seized the imagination of the media, and that became the focus of the crime both for her defenders and for those who defended her attackers.

§ *Naming rape victims will remove the stigma against rape.* Of all the arguments in favor of naming victims, this is the silliest, and the most insincere. Sure, NBC's Michael Gartner told *Newsweek*, the consequences will be "extraordinarily difficult for this generation, but it may perhaps help their daughters and granddaughters." How selfish of women to balk at offering themselves on the altar of little girls yet unborn! If Gartner wishes to make a better world for my descendants, he is amply well placed to get cracking. He could demand nonsensationalized reporting of sex crimes; he could hire more female reporters and producers; he could use NBC News to dispel false notions about rape—for example, the idea that

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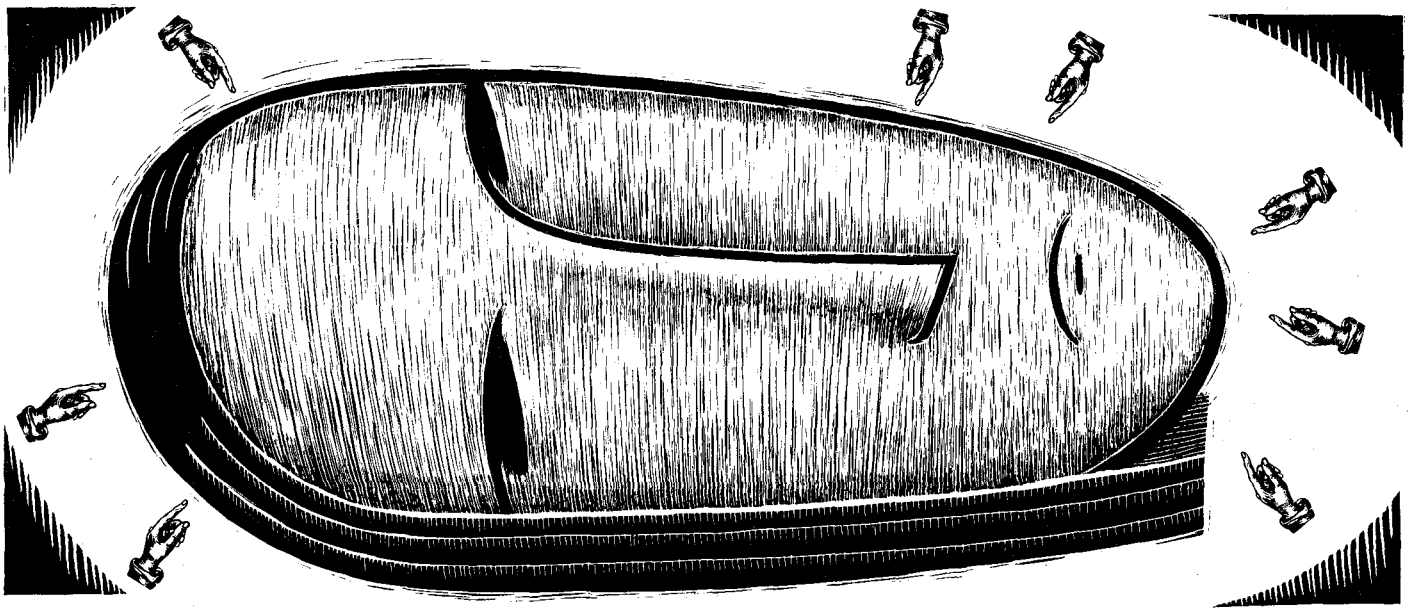
"who the woman is is material." Throughout the country there are dozens of speakouts against rape at which victims publicly tell of their experiences. Every year there are Take Back the Night marches in Manhattan. Where are the cameras and the reporters on these occasions? Adding misery to hundreds of thousands of women a year and—as just about every expert in the field believes—dramatically lowering the already abysmal incidence of rape reporting (one in ten) will not help my granddaughter; it will only make it more likely that her grandmother, her mother and she herself will be raped by men who have not been brought to justice.

This argument is, furthermore, based on a questionable assumption. Why would society blame rape victims less if it knew who they were? Perhaps its censure would simply be amplified. Instead of thinking, If ordinary, decent, conventional women get raped in large numbers it *can't* be their fault, people might well think, Goodness, there are a lot more women asking for it than we thought. After the invasion of Kuwait, in which scores of women were raped by Iraqi soldiers, there was no dispensation from the traditional harsh treatment of rape victims, some of whom, pregnant and in disgrace, had attempted suicide, gone into hiding or fled the country. One woman told *USA Today* that she wished she were dead. America is not Kuwait, but here, too, many believe that a woman can't be raped against her will and that damaged goods are damaged goods. (Curious how publicity is supposed to lessen the stigma against rape victims but only adds to the suffering of johns.)

One also has to wonder about the urgency with which Gartner and the other male proponents of the anti-stigma theory, with no history of public concern for women, declare themselves the best judge of women's interests and advocate a policy that they themselves will never have to bear the consequences of. Gartner cited, as did many others, the *Des Moines Register* profile of a named rape victim but neglected to mention that the victim, Nancy Ziegenmeyer, volunteered the use of her name, seven months after reporting the crime—in other words, after she had had a chance to come to terms with her experience and to inform her family and friends in a way she found suitable. (Ziegenmeyer, by the way, opposes involuntary naming.) Why is it that, where women are concerned, the difference between choice and coercion eludes so many? Rapists, too, persuade themselves that they know what women really want and need.

§ *William Smith's name has been dragged through the mud. Why should his accuser be protected?* Actually, William Smith has been portrayed rather favorably in the media. No anonymous pejoratives for him: He is "one of the least spoiled and least arrogant of the young Kennedys" (*Time*); an "unlikely villain" (*Newsweek*); "a man of gentleness and humor," "the un-Kennedy," "a good listener" (*The New York Times*); from a "wounded," "tragic" family (*passim*). Certainly he has been subjected to a great deal of unpleasant media attention, and even if he is eventually found innocent, some people will always suspect that he is guilty. But no one forced the media to sensationalize the story; that was a conscious editorial decision, not an act of God. Instead of heaping slurs on the Palm Beach woman in order to even things up, the media should be asking itself why it did not adopt a more circumspect attitude toward the case from the outset.

The tit-for-tat view of rape reporting appeals to many people because of its apparent impartiality. Feminists of the pure equal-treatment school like it because it looks gender neutral (as if rape were a gender-neutral crime). And nonfeminist men like it because, while looking gender neutral, it would, in practice, advantage men. "Should the press be in the business of protecting certain groups but not others—," wrote *Washington Post* columnist Richard Cohen, "alleged victims (females), but not the accused (males)? My answer is no." Cohen, like Michael Gartner, presents himself as having women's best interests at heart: "If rape's indelible stigma is ever to fade, the press has to stop being complicitous in perpetuating the sexist aura that surrounds it." Thus, by some mysterious alchemy, the media, which is perhaps the single biggest promoter of the sexist aura surrounding crimes of violence against women, can redeem itself by jettisoning the



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only policy it has that eases, rather than augments, the victim's anguish.

Behind the tit-for-tat argument lies a particular vision of rape in which the odds are even that the alleged victim is really the victimizer—a seductress, blackmailer, hysteric, who is bringing a false charge. That was the early word on the Palm Beach woman, and it's hard not to conclude that publicizing her identity was punitive: She's caused all this trouble, is visiting yet more "tragedy" on America's royal family, and had better be telling the truth. In fact, the appeal of naming the victim seems to rest not in the hope that it "may perhaps" someday make rape reporting less painful but in the certainty that right now it makes such reporting *more* painful, thereby inhibiting false accusations. Although studies have repeatedly shown that fabricated rape charges are extremely rare, recent years have seen a number of cases: Tawana Brawley, for example, and Cathleen Crowell Webb, who recanted her testimony after finding Jesus and then hugged her newly freed, no-longer-alleged-assailant on the *Donahue* show. A year ago a Nebraska woman who admitted filing a false charge was ordered by a judge to purchase newspaper ads and radio spots apologizing to the man she had accused. (She was also sentenced to six months in jail.) It is not unknown for other criminal charges to be fabricated, but has anyone ever been forced into a public apology in those cases? The tenor of the equal-publicity argument is captured perfectly by the (female) letter writer to *Time* who suggested that newspapers publish both names and both photos too. Why not bring back trial by ordeal and make the two of them grasp bars of red-hot iron?

Fundamentally, the arguments about naming rape victims center around two contested areas: acquaintance rape and privacy. While the women's movement has had some success in expanding the definition of rape to include sexual violation by persons known to the victim—as I write, *The New York Times* is running an excellent series on such rape, containing interviews with women named or anonymous by their choice (atonement?)—there is also a lot of backlash.

The all-male editorial board of the *New York Post*, which rather ostentatiously refused to print the Palm Beach woman's name, has actually proposed a change in the law to distinguish between "real rape" (what the jogger suffered) and acquaintance rape, confusedly described as a "sexual encounter, forced or not," that "has been preceded by a series of consensual activities." *Forced or not?*

At the other end of the literary social scale, there's Camille (No Means Yes) Paglia, academia's answer to Phyllis Schlafly, repackaging hoary myths about rape as a bold dissent from feminist orthodoxy and "political correctness." Indeed, an attack on the concept of acquaintance rape figures prominently in the many diatribes against current intellectual trends on campus. It's as though the notion of consensual sex were some incomprehensible French literary theory that threatened the very foundations of Western Civ. And, come to think of it, maybe it does.

Finally, there is the issue of privacy. Supporters of naming like to say that anonymity implies that rape is something to be ashamed of. But must this be its meaning? It says a great deal about the impoverishment of privacy as a value in our time that many intelligent people can find no justification for it but shame, guilt, cowardice and prudishness. As the tabloidization of the media proceeds apace, as the boundaries between the public and the personal waver and fade away, good citizenship has come to require of more and more people that they put themselves forward, regardless of the cost, as exhibit A in a national civics lesson. In this sense, rape victims are in the same position as homosexuals threatened with "outing" for the good of other gays, or witnesses forced to give painful and embarrassing testimony in televised courtrooms so that the couch potatoes at home can appreciate the beauty of the legal process.

But there are lots of reasons a rape victim might not want her name in the paper that have nothing to do with shame. She might not want her mother to know, or her children, or her children's evil little classmates, or obscene phone callers, or other rapists. Every person reading this article probably has his or her secrets, things that aren't necessarily shameful (or things that are) but are liable to misconstructions, false sympathy and stupid questions from the tactless and ignorant. Things that are just plain nobody's business unless you want them to be.

Instead of denying privacy to rape victims, we should take a good hard look at our national passion for thrusting unwanted publicity on people who are not accused of wrongdoing but find themselves willy-nilly in the news. ("How did it *feel* to watch your child being torn to pieces by wild animals?" "It felt terrible, Maury, terrible.") I've argued here that society's attitudes toward rape justify privacy for rape complainants, and that indeed those attitudes lurk behind the arguments for publicity. But something else lurks there as well: a desensitization to the lurid and prurient way in which the media exploits the sufferings of any ordinary person touched by a noteworthy crime or tragedy. Most of the people who have spoken out against anonymity are journalists, celebrity lawyers, media executives and politicos—people who put themselves forward in the press and on television as a matter of course and who are used to taking their knocks as the price of national attention. It must be hard for such people to sympathize with someone who doesn't want to play the media game—especially if it's in a "good cause."

I'm not at all sure there is a good cause here. Titillation, not education, seems the likely reason for the glare on the Palm Beach case. But even if I'm unduly cynical and the media sincerely wishes to conduct a teach-in on rape, the interests of the public can be served without humiliating the complainant. Doctors educate one another with case histories in which patients are identified only by initials and in which other nonrelevant identifying details are changed. Lawyers file cases on behalf of Jane Doe and John Roe and expect the Supreme Court to "make up its mind" nonetheless.

If the media wants to educate the public about rape, it can do so without names. What the coverage of the Palm Beach case shows is that it needs to educate itself first. □

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STOP THE LEGAL LYNCHING OF

MUMIA ABU-JAMAL!

To our liberation movements, the international community, and all progressive people:

The State of Pennsylvania is planning the execution of a U.S. political prisoner. Unless we organize to stop it, MUMIA ABU-JAMAL will soon become the first political prisoner executed in this country since the Rosenbergs.

Mumia Abu-Jamal has been on death row since 1982. A former Black Panther, a journalist, and a supporter of MOVE, Mumia has been a target of the Philadelphia Police Department since the late 1960's. His articles for the Panther Party newspaper exposed the racist violence of the Philadelphia police and their chief, Frank Rizzo. Rizzo's response was a military style raid against the Panther headquarters, vicious beatings of its members, and a series of trumped-up charges. Mumia was one of those singled out.

In the 1970's, Frank Rizzo was the 'law and order' mayor of Philadelphia, and Mumia was one of the few journalists willing to speak out against the violence of his administration. In 1978, when Rizzo ordered the policy to beseige and then assault a MOVE house, Mumia was the only reporter to interview MOVE members. Rizzo publicly vowed revenge.

In December 1981, Mumia saw his brother being beaten by a policeman. Mumia intervened. The policeman was killed and Mumia critically wounded. The trial was a farce presided over by a judge who was a retired member of the Fraternal Order of Police. He refused Mumia's request to represent himself. Black people were systematically excluded from the jury. An article about Mumia at age 16 for the *Philadelphia Inquirer* was introduced to prove 'intent' of an alleged long-held wish to kill cops and to secure the death penalty.

There is a long history of using the death penalty against radicals: Haymarket Square martyrs, Joe Hill, Sacco and Vanzetti, the Rosenbergs. Numerous organizers of the African-American, Native American, Mexican, Puerto Rican and Asian American communities historically have been executed with or without the benefit of a trial. In the 1960's and 70's, one of the tactics favored by the FBI was to accuse those it considered enemies of the government of shooting at or killing police. This was used to justify the police executions of Panthers Bobby Hutton, Zayd Malik Shakur and Fred Hampton and of Puerto Rican Independence activists Soto-Arrivi and Dario Rosado. Some of the longest-held political prisoners and prisoners-of-war in the U.S., including many former Black Panthers and American Indian Movement leader, Leonard Peltier, are still held in prison on trumped-up charges of killing police or FBI agents. Dhoruba bin Wahad, a former leader of the New York Black Panther Party, was recently freed after doing 19 years in prison on a fabricated charge of shooting two police.

We need to stop the railroad of Mumia Abu-Jamal. The death penalty means we have little time to do it. Mumia has exhausted his state appeals and Pennsylvania's governor Robert Casey has begun signing death warrants. The U.S. Supreme Court just added its own blessing by refusing to review the case.

We must not allow the same racist fear and hatred of African-American self-determination that brought about COINTELPRO to execute Mumia. We cannot allow the state to finish the job the FBI and Philadelphia police started when they dropped the bomb on the MOVE house in May 1985 killing 11 men, women and children, by putting Mumia Abu-Jamal to death. We must put a stop to this genocidal agenda that has put more than 2400 Third World and white working class people on death rows around the country. The death penalty has already been used to kill children, the mentally retarded, and the innocent. Now, unless we stop it, it will again be used as a tool of political revenge. The struggle against racism and injustice in this country has had enough martyrs.

We, the undersigned Prisoners of War, political prisoners, and politically conscious social prisoners demand that Governor Casey commute the death sentence of Mumia Abu-Jamal. (Write to Gov. Robert Casey, Main Capitol Bldg., Rm. 225, Harrisburg, PA 17120.) We call upon our movements, our communities, progressive nations and all anti-racist people committed to human rights to join us in undertaking all possible measures to stop this execution. We urge you to adopt this case as the highest priority in the struggle for justice. Only our collective power can save this man that the Black community of Philadelphia calls "the Voice of the Voiceless."

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Carlos Africa
Chuckie (Sims) Africa
Delbert (Orr) Africa
Ramona Africa
William Phillips Africa
Silvia Baraldini
A. Jahaad Bernier
Herman Bell
Alan Berkman
Tim Blunk
Anthony X Bradshaw
Marilyn Buck
Judy Clark
Mark Cook
Pamela Cooper
William Davenport-El
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Linda Evans
Herman Ferguson
Bro. Cecilio Chui Ferguson-El
Walter Figueroa
Larry W. Giddings
David Gilbert
Rickke L. Green
Bashir Hameed
Tarik James Haskins
Eddie Hatcher
Robert Seth' Hayes
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Ricardo Hunter-Bey
Sekou Cinque T.M. Kambui
Yu Kikumura
Barbara Curzi-Laaman
Jaan Karl Laaman
Maliki Shakur Latine
Raymond Luc Levasseur
Abdul Majid
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Tom Manning
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Ed Mead
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BOOKS & THE ARTS.

The Red and the Black

JON WIENER

HAMMER AND HOE: Alabama Communists During the Great Depression. *By Robin D.G. Kelley. University of North Carolina. 369 pp. $34.95. Paper $12.95.*

The Communist International's "Third Period," decreed by Stalin in 1928, has long been notorious for its equation of social democracy with fascism, as well as its implausible declaration that the Negroes of the Black Belt counties of the American South constituted an "oppressed nation" with a "right of self-determination"—a claim that had never been put forward by blacks in the United States. Despite the distinct air of unreality about the Third Period line, the American South served as a key proving ground for Stalin's new policy, and the American Communist Party was ordered to go to work organizing Southern black sharecroppers, whom they had previously ignored.

Party spokesperson and historian James Allen explained: The Black Belt was the weakest link in the chain of American capitalism. He called for the confiscation of plantations and the creation of collective farms, along with creation of "councils of Soviets of peasants and workers seizing power at first on a local scale." Thus, Southern blacks were to follow the path blazed by Russian peasants after 1917. Historians have understandably viewed this strategy of Stalin's as "a singularly poor mobilizing device" in the South. Nevertheless, Robin Kelley shows that it led the Communist Party to organize a militant Communist movement in Alabama, made up almost entirely of poor black people who had no Euro-American radical tradition.

When the C.P. arrived in Alabama in 1929 to organize blacks—with three organizers at first, but soon with ninety—it had no competition: no unions, no Socialist Party, no representatives of Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association. A tiny Birmingham N.A.A.C.P. chapter was mostly inactive. The Communists promptly endorsed a black candidate, Walter Lewis, for governor—something no Alabama party had done since Reconstruction, sixty years earlier. The C.P. election platform called for complete racial equality and declared that self-determination in the Black Belt was the only way to end lynching and achieve black political rights. By defining blacks as an oppressed nation, even in Stalin's unlikely formulation, the Communists had endowed the black struggle with dignity and significance. It's not hard to see why black workers like Hosea Hudson of Birmingham eagerly joined the C.P., often at the first meetings they attended: "It look like the thing I had been looking for," Hudson told historian Nell Painter in his oral autobiography, *The Narrative of Hosea Hudson.*

Jon Wiener teaches history at the University of California, Irvine, and is a contributing editor of The Nation.

> *By defining blacks as an oppressed nation, the Communists had endowed the black struggle with dignity and significance.*

The Alabama Share Croppers' Union (S.C.U.), organized by the Communists, was the party's greatest achievement and the incarnation of Third Period militance. The party program included a demand for abolition of all debts owed by poor farmers and tenants. Incorporated into the program of the S.C.U., this demand proved to be a big draw among indebted sharecroppers and culminated in the 1932 Reeltown shootout, where S.C.U. members defended a member when the sheriff came to attach his livestock for nonpayment of a debt to the local merchant. One S.C.U. member was killed in the gun battle, and two organizers died in jail a few days later. In the funeral procession in Birmingham, 3,000 people marched six miles, following caskets draped in banners with the hammer and sickle. Nineteen S.C.U. members were put on trial and were defended by the party's International Labor Defense (I.L.D.); five were sentenced to terms ranging from five to fifteen years. The *Daily Worker* held up the Reeltown militants as the finest example of the black revolutionary tradition and proof of the validity of the party's self-determination program.

Part of this story surfaced in 1974 in Theodore Rosengarten's *All God's Dangers: The Life of Nate Shaw*, which won the prestigious National Book Award and was recently dramatized Off Broadway. This oral autobiography of a militant member of the Share Croppers' Union centers on the Reeltown shootout, in which "Nate Shaw" was a key figure. "I stood up against this southern way of life," Shaw said. "Can you call that a crime? Can *I* call it a crime?" Shot from behind, Shaw was arrested and jailed; he did not indicate that he was aware his case put him in the headlines of the *Daily Worker* during the weeks leading up to his trial. Only at his trial, he says, did he hear that "there's a secret in this union somewhere and I ain't never understood it. . . . [T]his union came from across the waters, and they called it a 'soviet' union." Shaw served twelve years in prison; the I.L.D. sent him five dollars a month for the entire time, plus a fruitcake every Christmas. The C.P. takes care of its own, even though they may not know they are its own.

One of the satisfactions of reading *Hammer and Hoe* is learning the context in which Nate Shaw acted. Before the Reeltown shootout the S.C.U. had 718 members in four Alabama counties; the incident led more blacks to flock to the union. Six months later, 2,000 members were organized into seventy-three locals, eighty women's auxiliaries and twenty youth groups. All were black. The absence of whites wasn't only an effect of racism; at least one white was lynched because of his support for the S.C.U., and Kelley found other evidence of C.P. sympathy among poor whites in the Black Belt: In Elmore County, an S.C.U. stronghold, 275 votes were cast for William Z. Foster in the all-white 1932 presidential election—about 8 percent of the total, and considerably more than Herbert Hoover received in the county.

The one chapter in the history of Alabama Communism that everyone heard about was Scottsboro, the case in which the I.L.D. built a massive campaign in its defense of nine young black men accused of raping two white women on a freight train in 1931. Eight of the men had been sentenced to death. It's

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hard to add anything to Dan Carter's encyclopedic *Scottsboro*, which conveys more of the *Daily Worker*'s Third Period invective against the N.A.A.C.P. than Kelley does. Criticizing the organization's reliance on legal challenges rather than mass action, the *Worker* said of the N.A.A.C.P., "They will kiss the rope that hangs their brothers, if only the rope is blessed by a ruling class judge." In response, Kelley reports, the N.A.A.C.P. petitioned the all-white Birmingham City Commission, "We wish to call your attention to the inroads being made among people of this City and State, white and colored, by insidious propaganda of Communism, which we are being looked to [to] curb and do propose to combat and destroy." The Birmingham N.A.A.C.P., Kelley reports, had a total paid membership in January 1931 of six. By 1934, the I.L.D. had 3,000 members in Birmingham alone.

In 1935, when Stalin finally brought the disastrous Third Period to an end and called for a Popular Front with socialists to stop fascism, Alabama's black Communists dutifully did what they were told: Instead of attacking the N.A.A.C.P., members were instructed to join. The C.P. dismantled the I.L.D.; it endorsed Lister Hill for Alabama senator despite his opposition to antilynching legislation, because he was less reactionary than his opponent; it quietly dropped the goal of self-determination for the Black Belt; and, most important for Kelley, the party ordered the dissolution of the Share Croppers' Union, which the *Daily Worker* had hailed as the incarnation of the revolutionary black spirit. Critics on the left, including some black Communists, argued that the party couldn't tolerate the existence of a militant black union that was increasingly independent—especially when the Popular Front required alliances with Southern liberals and moderates.

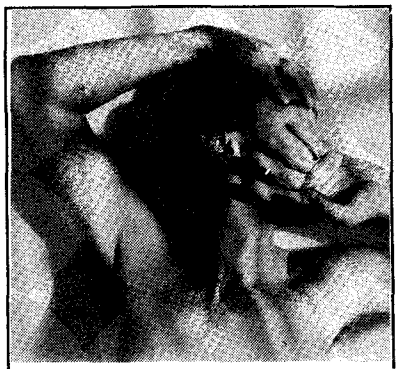
The Popular Front period is usually regarded as the Communists' high point in American history; Kelley argues that it brought decline for the party in Alabama as it retreated from black working-class militancy to seek entry into the world of Southern white liberalism. When Stalin called for Communists to form alliances with socialists in 1935, he was thinking more about France than Alabama, but Alabama's party members did the best they could to find some socialists with whom to form a Popular Front. They found a few allies at the nonsectarian Highlander Folk School in Tennessee, but aside from them, "virtually every SP leader in the South rejected any association with Communists." Next they sought allies among white liberals and organized labor. Before the Popular Front, the C.P. had fought for black self-determination; now they fought for the C.I.O. and for civil liberties. The party challenged local seditious literature ordinances, under which people were prosecuted and sentenced to 180 days at hard labor for possessing copies of *The Nation* (to be fair, the crime included possession of *The New Republic* as well).

Black voting rights constituted another focus for the Popular Front. Kelley tells the story of the Right to Vote Club, organized by Communists in 1938, but he doesn't report the significant efforts of non-Communists that preceded this campaign: A United Mine Workers local in the Birmingham area, under non-Communist leadership, in 1937 insisted that every white member accompany a black member to the county board of registrars and help the black miner register to vote; the poll tax for both blacks and whites was paid by the union. The U.M.W. reported that with this strategy it succeeded in registering 218 white and 267 black miners, and union leaders planned to take the tactic statewide. That history, reported by Ralph Bunche, is told by Alabama historian Robert Norrell in the current *Journal of Southern History*.

Kelley starts his story the following year, when a legal challenge to the board of registrars in Birmingham went to the State Supreme Court and eventually to federal court. He suggests that party members initiated this suit, and he doesn't mention the N.A.A.C.P. in connection with it. But Norrell, citing correspondence between local N.A.A.C.P. attorney Arthur Shores and Thurgood Marshall, writes that the suit was brought by the N.A.A.C.P. It's still unclear which organization can rightfully claim the credit for Alabama's first formal challenge to black disfranchisement in the twentieth century.

Despite some victories, the Popular Front led to disastrous losses of dues-paying members in the South: In Alabama, Mississippi and Georgia, the party's paid membership dropped to 250 by 1937; three years earlier Birmingham alone had 1,000 members. The problem, Kelley argues, was that in its effort to attract white members the party was alienating its black base by its new coolness toward black militance, especially in its dissolution of the Share Croppers' Union.

The Hitler-Stalin pact of August 1939



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led to an all-too-familiar reversal of the party line: The Comintern ordered the American party to keep the country out of an "imperialist war" against Hitler and to break with "Social Democratic" leaders, including Roosevelt, who sought to mobilize American aid for Britain. Anti-war work was to take precedence over all other issues, including union organizing and fighting racism. In Harlem, as Mark Naison showed in his book *Communists in Harlem During the Depression*, the new line was "political suicide."

But in Alabama, according to Kelley, the new line had the opposite result. After the Nazi-Soviet pact, the party "emerged with renewed strength." By discarding the Popular Front and its effort to recruit white liberals, the party attracted a new group of black activists, an "eclectic gathering of independent radicals, rebellious youth, Christian Socialists, black nationalists, and budding feminists" who "shaped Birmingham Party politics and fashioned a new culture of opposition derived from militant interracialism, socialist values, and democratic principles." For the first time in the Birmingham party's history, Kelley reports, women raised the "Woman Question" "directly and unambiguously." Thus, in the upside-down world of Alabama Communism, the party's best years—at least in Kelley's account—were its most sectarian, which in Alabama meant its years of greatest commitment to black militance: the Third Period and the era of the Nazi-Soviet pact.

Hammer and Hoe contains plenty of evidence of the Alabama party's dutiful subservience to Moscow. Alabama blacks, Kelley observes, were taught that "Stalin was the 'new Lincoln,'" which sort of takes your breath away. When Nazi Germany jailed Communist leader Ernst Thaelmann, the Share Croppers' Union "organized a mass rally outside of Dadeville to protest Thaelmann's imprisonment." The significance of this for Kelley is not that the C.P. had blacks put the interests of the U.S.S.R. ahead of its own desperate needs but rather that this internationalism strengthened Alabama blacks because it "placed their own local, seemingly insignificant struggles within a world context."

Clearly the party did not win support from blacks in Alabama by describing Stalin as a new Lincoln. It succeeded in part because it fought hard for black rights at a time when few other groups had the courage to do so. Kelley's explanation is deeper: The C.P. succeeded when blacks brought their own culture of resistance into the party. "Black Alabama Communists understood the terrain of struggle and relied primarily on evasive, cunning forms of resistance," he writes. "These evasive tactics stood in stark contrast to Communist theoreticians' image of class struggle." For example, black Communists distributed leaflets in bundles of laundry, in barber shops and in lunch buckets; in denouncing injustice, they referred to the Bible as often as to the Communist Manifesto—in defiance of Central Committee directives. And the party adopted indigenous music; to the tune of "Give Me That Old-Time Religion" they sang "Give me that Old Communist Spirit. . . . It was good enough for Lenin, and it's good enough for me."

The principal challenge party doctrine posed to traditional black culture was the party's Third Period attack on the black elite in the name of empowerment of working people and its encouragement of working-class racial unity while still paying respect to black issues. Kelley admires the Alabama C.P., especially during the Third Period, for being "resilient enough to conform to black cultural traditions but taut enough to remain Marxist at the core."

The postwar demise of the C.P. was not solely the consequence of repression; in Alabama, Communists had faced murderous repression from the beginning. Here *Hammer and Hoe* is especially insightful: During the war, Kelley argues, many of the best party people, especially blacks, put all their work into the C.I.O. and in effect left the party—not because they were disillusioned with the party's goals but because they concluded that the C.I.O. provided Alabama blacks with "a better vehicle through which to realize these goals." For many black working people in Alabama, the C.I.O. was their first real alternative to the C.P., and they took it.

Robin Kelley's work is based on monumental archival research and dozens of interviews with surviving participants. It devotes substantial attention to the role of women in this militant subculture. All this makes *Hammer and Hoe* a fascinating and indispensable contribution to the history of American radicalism and to black history. □

Miami Vice

RANDALL KENAN

LOS GUSANOS. *By John Sayles. HarperCollins. 473 pp. $22.95.*

"Forgive me, my friend," says Don Quixote near the end of Cervantes's epic, "for having caused you to appear as mad as I by leading you to fall into the same error, that of believing that there are still knights-errant in the world." But that vision of chivalry didn't die with the old crusader; today its adherents tote submachine guns and high explosives, or so John Sayles tells us in his updated chronicle of dreamers of the impossible dream in his new novel *Los Gusanos* (The Worms).

Sayles's early work established him as a troubadour of the grotesque. From his first novel, *Pride of the Bimbos*, he demonstrated a healthy sense of the absurd, featuring a midget former detective who played five-man softball, dressed in drag, and was being hunted by a giant through the Deep South. A novel by turns hilarious and poignant, Sayles showed in it that his was a highly individual vision. This sensibility carried over into his filmmaking, as in *Brother From Another Planet*, his 1984 film about a horny-toed extraterrestrial aloose in Harlem. Quirky and offbeat, its politics were subtly stated and subservient to a fantastic vision.

Since then, Sayles has become more socially engaged in his work, becoming increasingly a Bard of Lost Causes, as signaled by his second novel, *Union Dues*, a hard-cored *Bildungsroman* dealing with a father and son and the proletariat. Here we see Sayles shift to the dreams of the working man. In his last two films, *Matewan* (which chronicles a defeated coal miners' strike in the 1920s) and *Eight Men Out* (the sad tale of the 1919 Chicago Black Sox scandal), his concerns begin to solidify the plight of working-class folk into a tragic and Quixotic set piece of Little Men versus Big Men, in which the former are hopelessly outnumbered and are defeated in body if not in spirit.

In *Los Gusanos*, Sayles pulls the same

Randall Kenan is the author of A Visitation of Spirits *(Doubleday). His story collection* Let the Dead Bury Their Dead *will be published by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich in the spring of 1992.*

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sled forward and offers us a salacious, insightful and emotionally provocative novel of the Cuban exile community in Miami—the ones Castro called "worms" upon their exodus—and of their lost homeland. The book's dramatis personae (it's chock full of characters) rivals some of the more plentiful novels of memory. To call this work a family saga belies its intricate structure and serious purpose; to call it a novel of espionage and intrigue and terrorism betrays its depth of characterization and occasional prose excellence; to call it a novel of obsession is only to begin to see it whole. For obsession is the poison and the balm at work in *Los Gusanos*, an obsession with Cuba.

Sayles's Cuba is at once the Land of Nod, Canaan, Mahagony, El Dorado and Troy, a land that is all things to all people, especially the people who can't possess it. To these people Cuba has become La Mancha, equally distorted and Never-Neverish, and for our protagonist, Marta de la Pena, less the isle of her childhood than the emblem of the shadow of what her family once was.

La Familia de la Pena. For decades they had been *gran rancheros* on their kilometers-big homestead outside the central-island town of Camagüey. In 1981 this clan teeters on the brink of extinction, still dominated by the bullish Scipio, now cataleptic with rage in a geriatric hospital in Miami. In this year Marta, a nurse in the hospital in which her father languishes, remakes herself in the image of Joan of Arc and prepares to embark upon her holy mission: to strike a blow at Castro. When confronted with the seeming lunacy of her mission, she says, "I know. But what we will do will speak louder. If you can only be a small flame, . . . you have to burn brightly." Sayles does not contradict such incendiary passion; rather, he attempts to lay bare the heart of this obsessive, patriotic madness.

A woman of disturbing mystery and depth, Marta carefully recruits her troops: Padre Martín, a defrocked priest and political naïf; Tío Felix, the younger brother of Scipio, the man with the boat and the doubts, whose memories of Cuba retain the seeds of shame and defeat; Dewey, an orderly at the hospital, a legend in his own mind, dangerously full of Rambo and Clint Eastwood, a wannabe soldier of fortune without a cause; El Halcón, assassin, pornographer, whoremonger, spy, a man who even in his days as a po-

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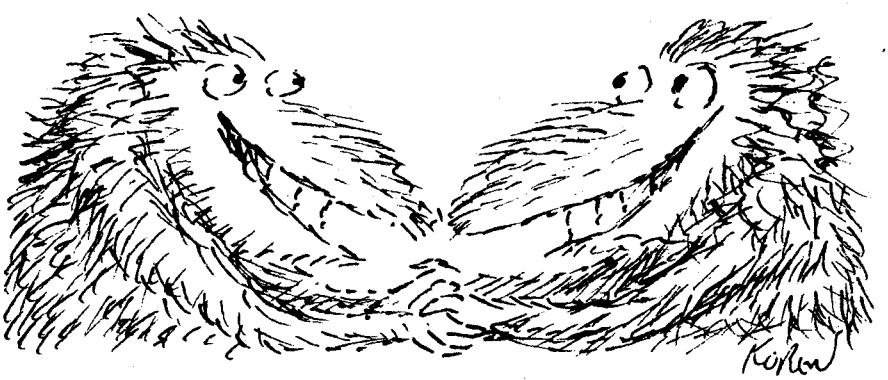

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liceman under Batista relished inflicting cruelty; and, finally, the spirit of Ambrosio de la Pena, the poet of the family, who died in the Bay of Pigs invasion, leaving only his diary of the event to fuel Marta's Holy Crusade.

The diary illuminates this whirligig of a plot, which is a spiral gaining momentum through the shucking off of onion-like layers of memory and action that are wed to an ever-present irony and paradox. "Paradox in history," as one of the characters, Villas, says late in the novel. Villas is a professor imprisoned for not submitting to the Fidelistas, whose travails bear strong resemblance to those eloquently reported in Armando Valladares's *Against All Hope*. During a hallucination in solitary confinement, Villas treats us to a history lesson: "Students, we must always be aware of the disharmony between the popular perception of government and its actual practice. The ideals of a political movement and the methods used to obtain those ideals are often at odds."

This view informs the plot of Sayles's novel, for at its center sit lies, like the worms of its title, big lies and little lies that gnaw away at its core; big lies like the C.I.A.'s involvement in promising to repatriate the Cubanos in 1961. (The lie, of course, which led to the embarrassment of the Kennedy Administration and to scores of deaths in the huge misadventure at Bahia Cochina.) The other lies are the infidelities of Castro, the betrayal of faithful men like Che Guevara and the men and women who wanted change but not what the revolution eventually became. And as lies tend toward confusion in *Los Gusanos*, we see how these exiled Cubanos are kept in a state of turmoil both hopeful and full of despair. Sayles points an angry finger at the machinations of the F.B.I./C.I.A./Tío Sam, which we are led to believe still persist, a sinister ballet of entrapment that is one of the mainsprings of this novel, as people are deceived, manipulated and eliminated.

With these tensions Sayles constructs a narrative both inevitable and surprising, and along the way he imparts a great deal. In fact, the author seems to know too damn much, from the grungy details of hospital dirty work to esoteric munitions technology to whorehouse specialties in La Habana before the revolution. His background on C.I.A. involvement is frightfully convincing, and in the character of Walt, an operative, we are given a chilling indictment of how a military-industrial complex values people according to how easily they can be manipulated, or pumped for information.

This is not to say that the novel is without problems. Some digressions seem to serve a purpose more political than narrative; the language, though at times lyrical, is uneven; and ultimately, the equation the novel sets up seems to have more variables than can be solved, and the reader works hard for diminishing returns. The role of women seems, despite Marta's action, subsumed by machismo. Marta as a woman is never truly glimpsed; she is overwhelmed by a masculine vision. While Sayles keeps alive the spirit of the Cuban poet/scholar/saint José Martí in allusions throughout the novel, for all intents and purposes *Los Gusanos* is still a *yanquí* novel having more in common with Dickens and Fielding than with Borges or Infante—yet this does not obviate its ambitious effort. Of late a number of young U.S. writers have attempted to pierce the "banana veil," most notable among them Denis Johnson with his *Stars at Noon* about Nicaragua, Robert Boswell with his *The Geography of Desire* about El Salvador and Thomas Sanchez with *Mile Zero*, like Sayles's novel set in Miami. But Sayles ups the ante and raises the stakes by plenty in daring to write approximately a sixth of the novel in Spanish. Not overwhelming, but enough to give some *yanquís* pause; he also resorts to Spanglish.

Some will no doubt wish to compare *Los Gusanos* with recent works by writers of Cuban lineage, like Christine Bell's *The Perez Family* or Oscar Hijuelos's transcendent novels *Our House in the Last World* and *The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love*, or even the works of the late Reinaldo Arenas. Some may be alarmed at the audacity of a white boy from Schenectady daring to presume to write knowingly about such an insular community. But Sayles's portrait of a community in exile and a Cuba decades gone hums with a conviction that cannot be dismissed lightly. In a fierce way, *Los Gusanos* is convincing and speaks to *yanquís* and Cubanos both of the power and pathos of those present-day knights-errant who are not so much tilting at windmills as shooting BB guns at the twin-headed chimera of history and power—in the eternal Bay of Pigs. □

Art and Cuba Now

COCO FUSCO

The impact of the three-decade U.S. embargo on Cuban economic and political life is a familiar story. But the blockade has also succeeded in making any progressive effort to engage with Cuba within the United States into a politically charged act designed as much to prove this country's intolerance as to counteract cold war depictions of the island. The latest chapter in this saga is a group show of contemporary Cuban art now on exhibit at the Bronx Museum. Titled "The Nearest Edge of the World: Art and Cuba Now," the show presents nine artists' work as the culmination of the island's visual-arts renaissance of the 1980s. These works, argues co-curator Rachel Weiss, testify to the success of the revolutionary experiment. Unfortunately, due to the hazards of intercultural exchange between the United States and Cuba, what we actually get to see here is only a muted version of the movement—or at least, what the movement was at its high point three years ago.

Crossing the gulf between the United States and Cuba is like walking through a mirror—it can shatter your preconceived images and/or force you to read everything in reverse. If postrevolutionary Cuban culture has proved anything, it is that there is no consensus as to the nature of radical aesthetics, cultural identity or art's relationship to social context. Each generation of artists and critics in Cuba has defined these things differently, and debates draw on beliefs, practices and arguments that antedate the revolution. However, artists and bureaucrats alike generally agree that the development of democratically acceptable arts education and the stabilization of cultural institutions in the 1970s gave birth to a new generation of artists. They debunked cultural bureaucrats' attempts to graft social realism imported from Eastern Europe onto Cuban art and the ultraleft position that Cuba had to erase its past and make its own new culture (since any assimilation of artistic styles from the capitalist world was a sign of ideological deviance).

Coco Fusco is a writer and curator who writes frequently on Cuban art and cultural politics.

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At the start of the 1980s several artists created local forums for discussion and began to seek out contact with the "international" art world by traveling to and participating in exhibits abroad. At the same time, critics and officials found new ways to justify their interest in popular culture. They pointed to the long history of eclecticism in Cuban art, influenced by Western capitalist styles, and the legacy of anticolonial resistance through both Afro-Caribbean and *criollo* (Cuban-born of Spanish descent) culture.

As the "new Cuban art" of the 1980s gained recognition internationally, Cuba's image improved. But being cultural emissaries put those artists in a position of relative privilege, which can easily become a sore point. The Higher Art Institute of Cubanacan, where many of them have studied and taught, is an occasional target of criticism from conservative hard-liners in Cuba. It is also true that Cuban artists who travel abroad are harassed by right-wing Cuban exiles and discouraged from returning.

The young artists who came to prominence as part of this movement can be divided into two groups. The first half broke ground in the early '80s by introducing a conceptualist orientation, popular cultural sources and other nontraditional materials into their work. The second group, many of whom are represented in "The Nearest Edge of the World" and who studied with their slightly older peers, are best known for their biting social commentary directed at the weaknesses and hypocrisy of their own system. Their primary tools have been happenings and other performances, scatological humor and political satire, graffiti and other hit-and-run tactics. While the arts have always been a barometer of the range of permissible individual expression within this collectively oriented society, these artists, most of whom are under 30, have pushed the boundaries the furthest. Their supporters argue that they embody the revolutionary spirit of the rectification campaign initiated in 1987 by Fidel Castro to counter excesses and errors. Some older artists look upon the work with skepticism. As one poet in his 40s explained to me during my last visit to the island in December, "The art isn't that great. They are using the same didacticism that they complain about."

It was the explicit irreverence toward revolutionary symbols in much of the work, as well as generational tension, that has led to the closing of several of the artists' exhibitions since 1988 and the firing of several bureaucrats who supported them. Cuba's cultural atmosphere in the past three years has lost much of its prior optimism and vibrancy, and the restrictions caused by Cuba's collapsing economy and power struggles in the upper echelons of the government haven't helped. Art students and young artists following in the spirit of their elders continue their work—in their homes, without much hope of exhibition. Those bureaucrats who were fired were replaced by others who represent the conservatism of the 1970s. Everyone is waiting to see what will happen next.

At the same time, Cuba has officially taken a different approach to the '80s generation. While the conflicts and firings continue, the National Museum of Fine Arts is amassing a collection of Cuban art from the past decade—although some speculate that the museum is purchasing censored works in order to hide them. Allowing controversial artists to travel has become a way of letting off steam inside while improving Cuba's image abroad, as co-curator Gerardo Mosquera hints in his catalogue essay. Dozens of artists are turning their trips into extended sojourns abroad, during which they earn money to purchase basic necessities, from art materials that are practically nonexistent at home to books, furniture, clothing and medicine. Nonetheless, even this tactic can backfire; in recent months, two members of the '80s group—Florencio Gelabert Soto and Arturo Cuenca—became the first of their generation to declare political exile in Miami. In addition, one of the artists in "The Nearest Edge of the World," Tomás Esson, whose slides of his series of portraits of Fidel were confiscated at the Havana airport upon his departure, declares that he will not return to Cuba until there is a change in the cultural climate.

The complex issues surrounding travel and the role Cuban artists play in presenting the country's image strongly affect this show. "The Nearest Edge of the World" presents us with an uneven selection of paintings, drawings and sculpture by many of the controversial young male artists, and then, in a token manner, includes photography, prints and painting by Marta Maria Perez and Ana Albertine Delgado, two women artists whose very personal and lyrical orientations have little to do with the political thrust of the show. Unexplained deficiencies in the installation of the pieces seriously mar their presentation: Works are exhibited with-

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out dates, as if to further the illusion that this is art in Cuba "now." Esson's multipaneled *SPOULAKK* (an acronym for *Ese Peo Uele a Caca,* or "This Fart Smells Like Shit") is split on opposite walls and incomplete, as are Segundo Planes's two drawing series. Alejandro Aguilera's sculptures of Latin American heroes, *On the Sea of the Americas*, is missing the low-edged basin of water in which the figures originally rested. Mounted in one of the museum's smaller galleries, the show seems rather caged in. Coupled with the absence of performance and installation that were so crucial to the movement, these factors give the impression that the group's freewheeling impulses have been contained, if not suppressed. Indeed, it appears that at least some of the decisions to exclude work were politically motivated; members of one group of artists not in the exhibition claim that the curators told them that their works might damage Cuba's image in the United States.

While the artists in the exhibition are not represented by their most controversial or even, in some cases, their finest work, many of their pieces do resonate quite powerfully as social commentary if the viewer knows their context. Glexis Novoa's *Practical Stage* is an expansive spread of paintings in lurid reds, oranges and yellows, arranged in a monumentlike display with lettering that resembles Cyrillic and with figures vaguely reminiscent of standard icons such as José Martí. Novoa shows us just how devoid of meaning social realist iconography feels after circulating in Cuba for three decades.

Alejandro Aguilera's roughly hewn, unpainted wood figures of Simón Bolívar, José Martí, Bartolome de las Casas, Jesus Christ and Che Guevara—all crowned with wire halos—fold two critiques into one: On the one hand, he equates a Marxist revolution's veneration of its martyrs with Catholic idolatry; on the other, his use of wood scraps that look as if they had been hauled from a construction site are a direct affront to the tradition of making monuments out of such dignified and permanent substances as concrete, iron and bronze. Carlos Rodriguez Cardenas's three series of diminutive paintings on plywood, all titled *Happy Meeting of Art, Politics and Sex*, lampoon high-minded political slogans that champion the Communist Party, the revolutionary work ethic and militarist symbolism. Each cartoonlike illustration deflates the seriousness of its text by literalizing hackneyed metaphors or presenting them as a mask for anxieties of inadequacy, both sexual and political. For example, *Construir el Cielo*, which can mean to build either the sky or heaven, becomes a half-finished wall of sky-blue bricks that blocks the darkness one might not want to see.

Tomás Esson's work, *For Peace*, represents the encounter between the United States and the Soviet Union as two linked canvases, each containing an ominous figure with bulging flesh and feathered ends. Surrounding the canvases and superimposed in the middle are Esson's signature talisman, a symbol perhaps of his own creativity. One of the large superimposed talismans has the Soviet flag painted on it, the other has the American flag—which could be read as optimistic about culture's role in overcoming the cold war or as a rather dark vision of the ideological manipulation of art.

Novoa's, Aguilera's, Rodriguez Cardenas's and Esson's pieces address Cuban art's relation to the state and its policies. Ciro Quintana's, Lazaro Saavedra's and Segundo Planes's works draw attention to their condition as artists at the edge of an "international" art market who rely on the highly selective information in European and American art magazines. This dilemma is rendered by Quintana in *The Wonders of Cuban Art* as the image of pigs feeding from a trough filled with miniature issues of *ARTnews*. In his *Smorgasbord*, Saavedra humorously rebels against the weight of art history by parodying it and scribbling marginalia in his purposely crude drawings. He represents himself and his peers as goonish cartoon characters with pretentious desires to join the ranks of the art-historical greats. Planes combines his mockery of conceptual art's deadpan descriptions of images with a poke at the trite romanticism of political jargon about destiny and one's path in life.

This postmodern celebration of the copy, bad painting, kitsch, cartoons and pastiche facilitates the comic send-ups of staid political rhetoric, enables the artists to explore their own situation in the world as geographically and culturally marginalized, and revitalizes a history of parodic assimilation and creative reinterpretation of imported and imposed discourses. As the Cuban critic Osvaldo Sanchez has so often and so lucidly argued, this is Cuba's claim to postmodernism—it is not a passive absorption of a foreign import but the logical outcome of Cuba's own long tradition of establishing cultural independence through expropriation. The Euro-American art world, now preoccupied with the origin of its own creativity, may have an ethnocentric stake in perceiving postmodernism as its invention, but the Cubans' brash adoption of the word only serves to show how very old it is.

Aesthetic strategies in the capitalist world have given us a depoliticized pastiche.

This show cries out for more of the sparkle that it hints at. In light of the fact that this is the first Cuban art show in the United States to receive foundation funding, it is even sadder that more was not made of the support. A performance by the group Arte Calle would have been apropos. Esson's eye-opening depictions of Fidel would not have been out of place. Nor would the work of José Toirac, Tanya Angulo, Juan Ballester and Ileana Villazon, whose searing comments on the hypocrisy of official portraiture question the accepted notion that revolutionary art has made a radical break with the past.

What will remain behind long after this show is gone is an extensive catalogue that has fine reproductions of the works but that is unfortunately riddled with peculiar, if not dubious, assertions and unanswered questions. Kellie Jones's attempt in her essay to compare the situation and approach of the Cuban artists with African-American experiments in rap music and filmmaking are thought-provoking, but her reliance on second-hand information about the Cubans severely hampers her argument, and the long jump across disciplines leaves too many gaps in her explanation. Luis Camnitzer's essay, presented as a regional Latin American perspective, is reminiscent of the anti-American posturing of the Latin American left of the 1960s, when Camnitzer left Uruguay and moved to the United States. The writer seems bent on establishing schematic separations between socialism and capitalism and between peripheral and metropolitan culture, rather than on making sense of Cuba's hybrid economic, political and

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cultural heritage. He completely overlooks the history of the pro-independence *criollo*'s carnivalesque parody of styles and customs imposed from outside—the strain of resistance culture whose influence is so evident in the work in this exhibition. Even more troublesome is Camnitzer's insistence that these artists are more akin in spirit to the modernist avant-garde than any postmodern movement, despite what the artists themselves assert. Postmodern debates and aesthetic strategies within the Western capitalist world have given us a depoliticized pastiche, but they have also generated the socially conscious and aesthetically experimental efforts of Group Material, The Border Arts Workshop and Gran Fury. Those groups' collectivist orientation, interdisciplinary tactics and oppositional stance make them part of the same *Zeitgeist* as their Cuban counterparts. Just thinking of some comparisons makes me itch for the opportunity to see a collaboration among these artists. Such a dialogue would do far more to further intercultural understanding than any exhibition.

"The Nearest Edge of the World" is at the Bronx Museum for the Arts until August 4. It can next be seen at the University Gallery, University of the South, Sewanee, Tennessee, from September 16–October 31. □

Past Present

GWYNETH CRAVENS

A few years before his death in 1936, Luigi Pirandello wrote in a private notebook, "There is somebody who's living my life. And I know nothing about him." He had already received enormous international acclaim as the author of the plays *Henry IV*, *Right You Are (If You Think You Are)* and *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, as well as for his short stories and novels; Greta Garbo had starred in the film version of his *As You Desire Me*; and in 1934 he had received the Nobel Prize. Yet he became steadily more isolated and his career more laced with contradictions. Although he had given his Nobel medal to be melted down to further the war in Abyssinia, and basked in Mussolini's enthusiastic patronage, Pirandello's work remained apolitical. He was said to detest the dictator, and he spent most of his later life in voluntary exile. To prevent the Fascists from clothing his corpse in a black shirt and the church from masterminding his funeral, Pirandello left word that he be allowed to go naked and alone out of the world: "The cart, the horse, the coachman, *è basta*. Burn me. . . ."

The distillation of Pirandello's thought about the paradoxical nature of identity can be found in his novel *One, No One, and One Hundred Thousand*. This book has been difficult to find in translation. Now the Eridanos Press (Horticultural Hall, 300 Massachusetts Avenue, Boston, MA 02115), which has as its aim the introduction of lesser-known classics of modern European fiction to American readers and which has already republished Pirandello's first novel, *The Late Mattia Pascal*, has brought out an excellent new translation by William Weaver. Pirandello spent several years writing the first chapter, and it took him fifteen years to complete the novel, which is 160 pages long. When it was published, in 1926, his son Stefano wrote a preface in the form of a letter to his father: "Now all is more clear and defined in you. . . . For you have not written a book. You have exercised your spirit, as in actions of life: not to become a finer man of letters, but to be better in yourself, a better man." Referring to obstacles and interruptions (among other difficulties, the elder Pirandello suffered financial reverses, death and illness in his family, and was finally forced to commit his incurably deranged wife to a mental hospital), Stefano recounts how his father would return to the novel whenever he could. "It was the motive that made you work with such alacrity. A tormenting refuge. Also avoided at times, I know, and feared." At the beginning, Pirandello considered the book a "proem" to his dramatic work. However, *One, No One, and One Hundred Thousand* became the epilogue, as he himself remarked, adding, "It arrives at the most extreme conclusions, the farthest consequences."

The narrator, Vitangelo Moscarda, lives comfortably and idly in the town of Richieri on the income from a bank founded by his deceased father. One day as he is looking at himself in the mirror, his wife happens to mention that his nose tilts to the right. This small, comic surprise produces a smile in the reader and a shock in Moscarda. How could he have been ignorant all his life of such an obvious fact about his appearance? He begins to make an inventory of his entire being and to conduct a solitary inquiry, which will eventually lead to the disintegration of his personality.

He begins by wanting to be alone *without himself*, "and, in fact, with an outsider present. . . . Solitude is never with you; it is always without you, and possibly only in the presence of an outsider, an alien person or place as may be, that completely ignores you. . . . True solitude is in a place that lives for itself, and for you it has no trace or voice. And you, then, are the outsider there." He discovers that he is an outsider "whom only the others can see and know, but not I." At this point he still believes that this outsider is only a single individual, the same person for everyone, the same person he is to himself. "How could I bear this outsider inside me? This outsider that I was for myself? How could I live without seeing him? Without knowing him? How could I remain forever doomed to carrying him with me, inside me, visible to others and beyond my vision?"

Through experiments with unwitting acquaintances in Richieri, a town saturated by the stark, somber aura of a de Chirico painting, he begins to see that the person he thinks of as himself does not exist. He makes a list of reflections:

> *1st—that I was not for others what I had till then believed I was for myself;*
>
> *2nd—that I could not see myself live;*
>
> *3rd—that, being unable to see myself live, I remained an outsider to myself, namely one whom the others could see and know, each in his own way; and I couldn't;*
>
> *4th—that it was impossible for me to confront this outsider, to see him and know him; I could see myself, but could not see him;*
>
> *5th—that my body, if I observed it from outside, was for me like a dream apparition; something that didn't know it was living, and stayed there, waiting for someone to take it;*
>
> *6th—that, just as I took this body of mine to be on occasion as I wanted myself and as I felt myself, so it could be taken by anyone else who would give it a reality in his own fashion;*
>
> *7th—that finally this body in itself was so much a nothing and a nobody that a puff of air could make it sneeze, today, and carry it off tomorrow.*

Moscarda decides to discover who he

Gwyneth Cravens's most recent novel is The Gates of Paradise *(Ticknor & Fields). She edits "Past Present," an occasional column.*

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appears to be to those closest to him and to amuse himself by spitefully dismantling "the me as I was for [them]." In so doing, he dismantles his own reality or, rather, the presumption that reality as it is for one person must be the same for everyone else. He discovers, for example, that the man to whom his wife is married is neither intelligent nor capable but is, rather, a fool suitable only for walking the dog. And he learns that no one else is as he had thought either.

Thus far, the reader continues to smile, mainly at the way Moscarda, who doesn't seem to take himself very seriously, describes his adventures—under headings like "A parenthesis, necessary for all," "We come down a bit" and "We end the parenthesis." But there is nothing inherently funny about the story. In fact, it soon becomes quite frightening. In bold asides, Moscarda asserts that we are imprisoned in the same condition as he. "I construct myself continually and I construct you, and you do the same. And the construction lasts as long as the material of our feelings doesn't crumble and as long as the cement of our will lasts. . . . The former has only to waver a little, and the latter has only to be altered by one degree or change ever so slightly, and it's goodbye to our reality!" Onward he goes in his logical, relentless pursuit. "The capacity for deluding ourselves that today's reality is the only true one, on the one hand, sustains us, but on the other, it plunges us into an endless void, because today's reality is destined to prove delusion for us tomorrow; and life doesn't conclude. It can't conclude." He twines his net ever more tightly around the reader. "Go on, resume reading this little book of mine," Moscarda tells us after giving the example of the common and intolerable embarrassment you experience when finding yourself divided by the unexpected, simultaneous presence of two friends from separate compartments of your life, "but without smiling any more as you've smiled till now." With a flourish, he produces a terrifying, abysmal vision. The truth. Pirandello, Moscarda, you or I—we are simultaneously one, no one, and one hundred thousand identities. And what then remains?

The final section, titled "No conclusion," resonates with the same stubborn transcendence with which Camus closes *The Stranger*. Moscarda's explorations lead to the disruption of the family business, to mayhem and to gunshots, and he finds himself on trial, an object of derision. His marriage, his fortune and his standing in the town ruined, he observes that everyone still insists on calling him Moscarda. But he feels himself nameless. "I am alive and I do not conclude. Life does not conclude. And life knows nothing of names. This tree, tremulous pulse of new leaves. I am this tree. Tree, cloud; tomorrow book or wind: the book I read, the wind I drink. All outside, wandering. . . . I die at every instant, and I am reborn, new and without memories: live and whole, no longer inside myself, but in everything outside." □

FILMS.

STUART KLAWANS

Thelma & Louise
Hangin' With the Homeboys
Tatie Danielle
Truly, Madly, Deeply

Once a woman has indulged herself in murdering a man, she will surely descend by slow degrees to robbing people, destroying property and breaking the speed limit. This law of human behavior, first observed by Thomas De Quincey, supplies the story line for *Thelma & Louise*, a pretty good movie directed by Ridley Scott.

Let's skip the *auteur* for the moment and get right to the picture's strengths, which are Susan Sarandon and Geena Davis. Sarandon plays Louise, a coffeeshop waitress with a troubled past; Davis is Thelma, an Arkansas housewife with a jerk of a husband. These characters lead hemmed-in lives, which are mirrored at first in the actresses' working conditions. The screenplay, by Callie Khouri, starts by requiring Sarandon and Davis to play the sort of stereotypical opposites found only in buddy pictures. Louise, for example, is brusque and orderly. She leaves for a weekend vacation carrying nothing but a toothbrush and a change of underwear, whereas the chaotic, eager-to-please Thelma packs half the contents of her bedroom. Mercifully, though, by the time these two friends have driven beyond the first leg of their journey, Sarandon and Davis have busted loose as well.

Outfitted with the most knowing eyes in American film since Bette Davis, Sarandon has often seemed separate from the actors who share the screen with her. Not that she's emotionally detached or lacks a talent for interplay. Just the opposite—her feelings sometimes rise to her skin like a flush, and she pays attention as acutely as anybody in the movies today. But she tends to be a bit superior to her surroundings, no matter what character she's playing; she just can't help sizing everybody up. In the role of Louise, she transforms these qualities into impatience, anger, hard-headedness—nothing very attractive. And yet Louise is good company. You put up with her for the same reason you put up with the more difficult of your friends, because Sarandon lets you sense what's going on behind the waspishness.

As Thelma, Geena Davis has a much more sympathetic role, probably the richest of her career. In the past, filmmakers have tended to use her for the sake of a basic contradiction—she's drop-dead gorgeous but likes to play the clown. Since people of all sexual persuasions find that a reassuring combination, there's always a place in the movies for the likes of her. As Thelma, though, Davis has the chance to add to her repertory of loose-limbed gestures, which so often have been used only to convey goofiness and gawkiness. Her joints go slack with self-abasement, pretended or otherwise, or crunch down in a killer grip at a moment of arousal. (Thelma is granted the movie's motel-sex scene, with its obligatory broken glass and swinging light bulb.) But best of all, Davis gets to swagger. She's a big woman, so it's good to see her roll her shoulders and take long, cocky strides. In fact, that's the key to Thelma's character—you feel she should have been walking like that all her life.

Strange, to find this performance and Sarandon's embedded in a Ridley Scott film. If you divide films into two categories—image-centered and actor-centered—then Scott has belonged to the first throughout his career. *Blade Runner*, *Alien*, *The Duellists*: These aren't so much stories as fashion statements. In *Thelma & Louise*, he is as meticulous as ever about appearances. The first sequences, in which the characters are still trapped in their old lives, are a series of *horror vacui* compositions. The frame is continually overstuffed with incident and detail; there's no room for these women to move. Then Scott voids the compositions, with a vengeance. On the run, Thelma and Louise find themselves in the Southwestern desert with nothing between them and eternity except the horizon—that, and of course a constantly changing veil of light. Scott still seems to think that "*Interior. Morning*" in a screenplay translates as "special effect."

Apply this directorial approach to a

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film that lives or dies with its actresses' personalities, and you get a vehicle that tends to lurch. *Thelma & Louise*, though a movie about free-spirited women, is full of laboriously prepared moments. Take the murder that kicks off the plot. First, Scott and Khouri have to show you the gun, which they do early and often. Then, when Thelma and Louise pull off the highway for a drink at a roadhouse, the filmmakers all but flash danger signs in neon. They build up to a scene of attempted rape detail by minute detail—which would be to their credit, except that the details are all familiar, and the violence obviously preordained. I wouldn't call these faults disastrous; they merely weigh down the front end of the movie and periodically recur to make it grind between gears. Should Ridley Scott shift up into drama? Gear down to a romp? He sometimes can't seem to decide, and so he makes the viewer coast along in neutral for minutes at a time.

In celluloid as in prose such bloodletting is becoming a convention.

For most moviegoers, that shouldn't spoil the fun. It will be curious, though, to see how people react to this women's road movie, which comes complete with scenes of revenge-taking against a series of brutish men. How many viewers will see it as a truly feminist film?

The question pops up with some urgency because of a coincidence: *Thelma & Louise* opened exactly one day after the Supreme Court handed down its decision in *Rust v. Sullivan*, restricting the medical advice a woman may receive if she's simultaneously pregnant and poor. Given the timing, I would be doing the film no favor by stressing its liberating virtues. What's the use of women's images being free on the screen if their bodies are in chains? So, in defense of *Thelma & Louise*, let me say that the lite-feminist fizz you get from it is just enough to be pleasant without seeming pretentious. Under the circumstances, that might be a virtue in itself—as well as a reminder that images can work all sorts of wonders, but probably don't have empowerment in their repertory, despite the wishes of us critics.

Consider how only a few years ago, it seemed radical just to show women killing a man, as Marleen Gorris did in *A Question of Silence*. Despite its blatant hokum, that film stirred up audiences like nothing I'd seen since the early days of blaxploitation and *The Spook Who Sat by the Door*. Today, some women are still working that vein of rage. In England, Helen Zahavi's novel *The Weekend* has been a recent *succès de scandale*, with its plot about a woman who gets "fed up" and starts killing men. The book was recently published in the United States, with an endorsement from Andrea Dworkin, and the film rights already have been sold. But will *The Weekend*, as a major motion picture, express the same fury that it does as a novel? I doubt it—and not because films are any more artistically compromised than commercial fiction. In celluloid as in prose, feminist bloodletting is already turning into a mere narrative convention. When Blake Edwards in *Switch* and Peter Greenaway in *Drowning by Numbers* both appropriate the theme, in films released within weeks of each other, you know that man slaughter, at least in fiction, has become as political as a car chase.

Thelma & Louise represents one more step in this process—and in this case, that's O.K. The movie is a mostly entertaining ride with a couple of smart, quirky actresses who get to make fools out of some louts. To me, that's worth the price of a ticket.

Hangin' With the Homeboys, a first feature by Joseph B. Vasquez, is more or less a South Bronx *I Vitelloni*, in which a carload of friends—two Puerto Ricans, two African-Americans—go cruising on Friday night. It is not one of the films that will change your life; but, like the most appealing of its characters, the picture is good-natured, unpretentious, a little naïve. It makes eighty-nine minutes go by in a breeze.

The story, such as it is, consists of a string of low-key episodes that put the characters to the test and separate the strivers from the idlers. Among the first group is Johnny (played with remarkable sweetness and ease by John Leguizamo), a supermarket clerk who could probably win a college scholarship if he would only make himself fill out the application. Tom (Mario Joyner), an aspiring actor, also might go on to better things, even though his greatest achievement so far is to have auditioned for a bit part that was cut out of *Rain Man*. The film's idlers are Willie (Doug E. Doug), who does absolutely nothing with his life except complain about racism, and Vinny (Nestor Serrano, looking ten years too old for the role), a good-for-nothing who lives off of women and likes to pretend that he's Italian.

As this summary suggests, *Hangin' With the Homeboys* comes perilously close to playing like a diagram rather than a movie; but Vasquez throws in just enough disorder to redeem the picture. The goings-on aren't as vivid as in, say, the Hudlin brothers' *House Party*, but the overall tone is jocular, the images are bright and cheery and the soundtrack bounces along nonstop. (Music credits outnumber the principal actors by eight to one.) Even so, the film's effort to sell itself as a comedy is somewhat deceptive, considering the undertow of pessimism that keeps tugging at the characters. These friends interact mainly by fighting—about women, money, race. Their dialogue confines itself to the level of, "No, fuck *you*." (The eloquence of the streets seldom carries over into the movie house these days.) Most telling of all, they cannot conceive of women as being human, just like themselves—a failing Vasquez shares to some extent. When he wants to give Johnny a vision of a bigger, better world outside the South Bronx, he does so by introducing him to Luna (Mary B. Ward), a young woman who's so elegant, brainy, self-assured and unconflicted that she amounts to a politically correct masturbation fantasy.

But then, masturbation fantasies are all that a kid like Johnny has to go on, so perhaps you'll find it in your heart to indulge him, and Vasquez too. He may fumble at creating female characters but succeeds in conveying warmth, sympathy, buoyant energy and humor. Not bad, for a debut.

So many bad comedies have been hitting the screen that you'll have to burrow into the not-so-recent releases if you want a good laugh. I would start with *Tatie Danielle*, directed by Etienne Chatiliez from a screenplay by Florence Quentin. It's the story of the meanest little old lady in the world—a widow in the French provinces, whose only pleasures, at the opening of the film, are soap operas, romance novels and the torture of her housekeeper. As played by the irresistible Tsilla Chelton, Tatie Danielle is four feet ten inches of pure spite, with an acidic little smile and limp gray hair that she brushes straight back because, well, why bother? All she really wants to do is die; but instead she moves in with her nephew's family in Paris, which gives her

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much greater scope for her assaults on polite, well-meaning idiots. Perhaps her high point comes when she first sees the Montparnasse skyscraper, the building every true Parisian feels duty-bound to abhor. Tatie Danielle just *loves* it.

If you would prefer to watch a comedy about nice people, I can wholeheartedly recommend *Truly, Madly, Deeply*, written and directed by Anthony Minghella. The characters are the British equivalent of *Nation* subscribers. They have more education than money and work at jobs they hope will be helpful to somebody. To a favorite nephew who's at risk of bourgeois pomposity, they might advise saying "bum" and "Trotsky" twice a day before meals.

One of these very nice people, played by Juliet Stevenson, is feeling utterly rotten. Her husband has died not so long ago, and she's bowled over by grief, so much so that the husband, played by Alan Rickman, comes back. He's quite substantial, as ghosts go. He can kiss his widow (though the temperature of his lips is a bit off-putting), still plays the cello and goes to political meetings and doesn't let death keep him from worrying about his health. I suspect he has a Jewish grandparent or two.

If it catches you in the wrong mood, *Truly, Madly, Deeply* will seem so whimsical that you'll want to gag. In the right mood, it's pure pleasure. Juliet Stevenson gives a stunning performance; the dialogue is eight or nine times smarter than what you're used to hearing; and Minghella's direction, though far from flashy, accomplishes what it sets out to do, by letting the events sneak up on you. When I left the theater, I was happy I'd decided to go to the movies.

Screening Schedule: The New York International Festival of Lesbian and Gay Film—or simply the New Festival—is on view at Manhattan's Biograph Cinema through June 23. The program booklet is only slightly less ample than a university course catalogue, so I think I can guarantee something for everyone. The festival this year is dedicated to the memory of Vito Russo.

At the Museum of Modern Art you can see a fifteenth anniversary tribute to San Francisco's Film Arts Foundation. The series of eighty films will be run through July 7.

And in San Francisco itself—or nearby, anyway, in Berkeley—the Pacific Film Archive is presenting "Music and the Movies" through July 18, as a twentieth anniversary tribute to itself. Happy birthday, P.F.A. □

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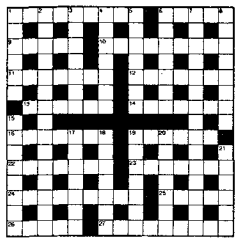

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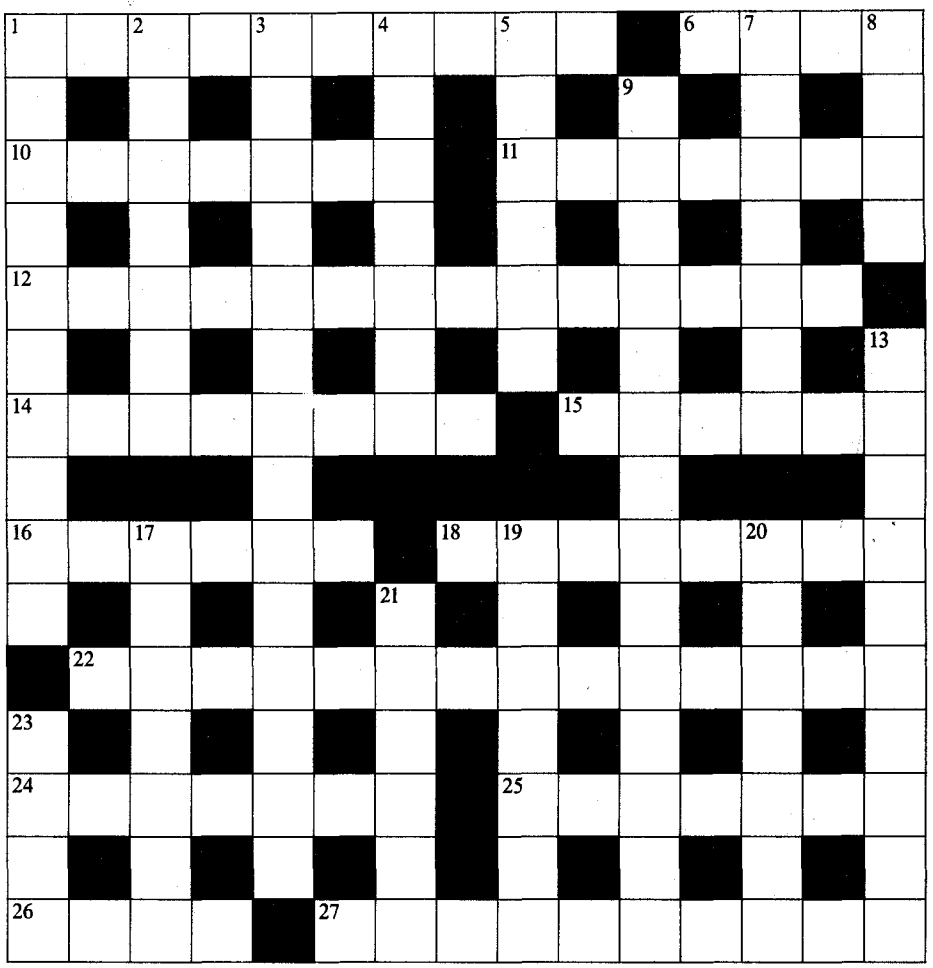
N	E	S	T	I	N	G	■	S	O	A	P	B	O	X
C	■	U	■	P	■	D	■	E	■	T	■	B	■	I
H	E	R	■	C	H	O	I	R	S	■	B	I	R	D
■	■	G	■	O	■	L	■	T	■	F	■	E	■	E
F	R	E	E	F	A	L	L	■	E	R	A	S	E	R
L	■	■	■	F	■	S	■	D	■	E	■	■	■	M
A	M	B	L	E	S	■	H	I	D	E	A	W	A	Y
G	■	U	■	E	■	S	■	C	■	F	■	E	■	■
S	O	F	A	■	G	H	E	T	T	O	■	E	O	N
H	■	F	■	I	■	I	■	A	■	R	■	P	■	O
I	R	O	N	O	R	E	■	T	R	A	C	E	R	S
P	■	O	■	U	■	L	■	E	■	L	■	R	■	E
S	I	N	U	S	■	D	I	S	C	L	O	S	E	S

Crossword Puzzle No. 2342

FRANK W. LEWIS



ACROSS

1 There seems to be a question of why chickens do, where the work is reputedly dirty. (10)
6 See 23 down
10 Part of the fort's defenses stood firm, but rode out in the confusion. (Did Thomas do it again?) (7)
11 One hears these old leaders permit no concealed weapons. (7)
12 The big gangster's weapons, according to a novel of the jazz age. (3,5,6)
14 Sounds like a more feline version of Batman with precipitation in the Himalayas. (8)
15 It may be suggested that we shouldn't do it at things of importance (unless the cold is responsible). (6)
16 What the editor does might be considered radical behavior. (6)
18 Lay off personnel at the dance—a real hot prospect. (8)
22 Eighty-seven, as used by Lincoln? (It's just an expression!) (6,2,6)
24 Around the end of summer, in short, a disguised C.I.A. comes very clean! (7)
25 Where students may sleep on a cold surface, fit for little animals. (7)
26 Those that do are not supposed to be tellers. (4)
27 In a rather rude ploy, men tell this as a strategical move. (10)

DOWN

1 Watchmen are evidently very wary! (10)
2 Peculiar people, fit to a T, perhaps with certain notions. (7)
3 The rather boring tales of very conventional writers? Bill gets paid, if one does this. (6,8)
4 Certainly not the direction of a place for inpatients! (7)
5 Act wise when it's the proper amount to take. (6)
7 Be equal in uniform. (7)
8 Invite someone to the kind of affair 9 was, by the sound of it, which is some job. (4)
9 Not a Back Bay social event, it had an artificially brave showing. (6,3,5)
13 Tatters of the sail? The answer is "perfectly fit!" (10)
17 See 23 down
19 One is not supposed to believe in Mr. Castro. (7)
20 It may take four singers to make her sweet in the drink game, as they might say. (7)
21 Secure from what they might have to do when you get in a tight spot? (6)
23, 6 across and 17 down They may try to take the wheel without touching it. (Acts as an angel with a broken date having flowers, in a sense.) (4-4,7)

PUZZLE BOOK

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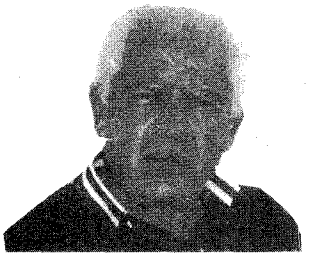

"For Israel to change its policy it must be coerced... It is our duty to call upon the U.S. to stop giving money to Israel... Public pressure is the only way left... We've come to the point that unless we advocate very radical steps we are giving up the struggle."

General (Res.) Matti Peled
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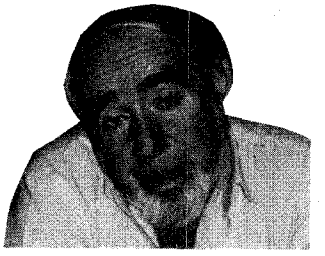

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- The U.S. should consistently oppose occupation and champion human rights & self-determination throughout the Middle East.
- The U.S. should recognize both Israel's and the Palestinians' rights to Statehood and national security.
- The U.S. should insist that Israel cease all illegal settlements, shootings, house arrests and demolitions, deportations, "administrative detentions", extended curfews and collective punishments in the occupied territories; and agree to direct negotiations with the PLO.
- The U.S. should considerably reduce, or totally suspend, the $3.5-billion annual subsidy to Israel until Israel agrees to end the occupation in accord with Security Council resolutions.
- The U.S. should no longer allow American Mid East policies to be manipulated by political and financial pressures orchestrated by the Israeli lobby in Washington or by repressive Arab monarchies and dictatorships in the region.

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